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## **THESIS**

**CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS AND MILITARIZATION  
IN EL SALVADOR**

by

Stephen D. Rittermann

March 2015

Thesis Advisor:  
Second Reader:

Thomas C. Bruneau  
Marcos Berger

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**CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS AND MILITARIZATION IN EL SALVADOR**

Stephen D. Rittermann  
Lieutenant Commander, United States Navy  
B.S., United States Naval Academy, 2004

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March 2015**

Author: Stephen D. Rittermann

Approved by: Thomas C. Bruneau, Ph.D.  
Thesis Advisor

Marcos Berger, Ph.D.  
Second Reader

Mohammed M. Hafez, Ph.D.  
Chair, Department of National Security Affairs

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis analyzes the state of civil-military relations and militarization in El Salvador under the leadership of President Mauricio Funes (2009–2014). Civil-military relations are examined using the Center for Civil-Military Relations “trinity” framework—first proposed by Thomas C. Bruneau in the journal *Revista Fuerzas Armadas y Sociedad* in 2005—which considers effectiveness, efficiency, and democratic civilian control. Militarization is presented in terms of Salvadoran troops in the streets. This thesis presents the linkage of these two phenomena as domestic security policy formation and implementation. The analysis demonstrates that informal civil-military relations have resulted in a largely undemocratic response to El Salvador’s sizeable security challenges. Two cases, in particular, are studied more closely: 1) President Funes’ unique relationship with General David Munguía Payés and 2) the government’s secret design of the 2012 gang truce. This thesis concludes that security policy formation under the Funes administration was haphazardly conducted as an expedient to El Salvador’s security dilemma and resulted in at least a partial democratic breakdown in the processes envisioned by the 1992 peace accords.

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ARENA	<i>Alianza Republicana Nacionalista</i> (Nationalist Republican Alliance)
Barrio 18	Eighteenth Street Gang
CCMR	Center for Civil-Military Relations
CNSP	<i>Consejo Nacional de Seguridad Publica</i> (National Public Security Council)
ERP	<i>Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo</i> (People's Revolutionary Army)
FAES	<i>Fuerzas Armadas de El Salvador</i> (Armed Forces of El Salvador)
FLP	<i>Fuerzas Populares de Liberación Farabundo Martí</i> (Farabundo Martí Popular Liberation Forces)
FMLN	<i>Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional</i> (Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front)
MDN	<i>Ministerio de la Defensa Nacional</i> (National Defense Ministry)
MOD	Ministry of Defense (generic)
MS-13	<i>Mara Salvatrucha</i>
PCS	<i>Partido Comunista de El Salvador</i> (Communist Party of El Salvador)
PDC	<i>Partido Demócrata Cristiano</i> (Cristian Democratic Party)
PNC	<i>Policía Nacional Civil</i> (National Civilian Police)
PRTC	<i>Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores Centroamericanos</i> (Revolutionary Workers' Party of Central America)
UN	United Nations
ONUSAL	United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador

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# I. INTRODUCTION

## A. BACKGROUND

El Salvador's guerrilla organizations, combined under the banner of the *Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional* (Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front, or FMLN) and the *Fuerzas Armadas de El Salvador* (Armed Forces of El Salvador, or FAES) stalemated after a grueling decade-long civil war from 1979–1992. At the close of the conflict, the international community and Salvadorans established almost laboratory-like conditions when developing the 1992 peace accords. For both exogenous and domestic reasons, the military's control of society, dominant since the onset of the Great Depression, had fractured. Amid the ashes between the Salvadoran military—no longer lavishly supported by U.S. funding—and the FMLN guerrillas, a new political alliance took hold.<sup>1</sup> Salvadoran business interests, civil society, former guerrillas, and military remnants alike worked with the United Nations (UN) to foster a new relationship that featured a drastic reduction of military forces. The impunity and ruthlessness of the armed forces violated a level of trust that even the Salvadoran people, used to the legacy of military rule, were not willing to abide.<sup>2</sup> The Chapultepec Peace Accords signed in January 1992, facilitated under the UN mission to El Salvador (ONUSAL), was the first UN complex peace-building effort and the most successful model for newly emerging democracies recovering from civil wars and military authoritarianism.<sup>3</sup> Several UN interventions kept the peace in the years that immediately followed the accords, and El Salvador did not relapse into conflict. Not surprisingly, in order to purchase that peace, compromise was required.

The Salvadoran Army has maintained much of its autonomy from the government and civil society to this day. Uniformed officers at the *Ministerio de la Defensa Nacional*

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<sup>1</sup> William Deane Stanley, *The Protection Racket State: Elite Politics, Military Extortion, and Civil War in El Salvador* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996), 233–4.

<sup>2</sup> Jeff Goodwin, *No Other Way Out: States and Revolutionary Movements, 1945–1991* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 155.

<sup>3</sup> Michael W. Doyle and Nicholas Sambanis, *Making War and Building Peace: United Nations Peace Operations* (Princeton: University Press, 2006), 206.

(Salvadoran Ministry of Defense, or MDN) control plans, operations, and budgets, while civilians in the executive and legislative branches are either incapable of or unwilling to assert their authority.<sup>4</sup> While former FMLN guerrillas could join the newly formed *Policía Nacional Civil* (National Civilian Police, or PNC), these same guerrillas were not allowed to join the Salvadoran armed forces. Amnesty for war crimes, one of the compromises ceded by the Salvadoran government to keep the peace, has left thousands of human rights violations unanswered.<sup>5</sup> The UN Truth Commission in 1993 connected war crimes to more than a hundred Salvadoran military officers, but these officers were dismissed, not prosecuted.<sup>6</sup> Justice has come slowly and indirectly for some; in 2011, the Salvadoran government under President Mauricio Funes affirmed that all military officers with international arrest warrants would be detained and investigated—a significant step against the power of the amnesty law.<sup>7</sup> Despite Funes’ claim, however, ex-ministers of defense José Guillermo García Merino and Carlos Eugenio Vides Casanova, the two most highly ranking targets for human rights abuses during the war, remain in retirement in Florida. Both ex-generals immigrated to the United States in 1989 under the George H. W. Bush Administration.<sup>8</sup> It is still unclear that extradition back to El Salvador would produce a conviction over the current amnesty.

Despite these shortcomings, the rising cost of domestic insecurity and economic stagnation in the region has led Salvadoran civilian leadership to rely more heavily on the military, granting the FAES a larger role in intelligence gathering and internal security

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<sup>4</sup> “Report on the Security Sector in Latin America and the Caribbean,” ed. Lucía Dammert, 1st ed. (Santiago, Chile: FLACSO-Chile, 2007), 24–8, 49.

<sup>5</sup> Shawn L. Bird and Philip J. Williams, “El Salvador: Revolt and Negotiated Transition,” in *Repression, Resistance, and Democratic Transition in Central America*, ed. Thomas W. Walker and Ariel C. Armony (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 2000), 39.

<sup>6</sup> J. Mark Ruhl, “Curbing Central America’s Militaries,” *Journal of Democracy* 15, no. 3 (2004): 142–3.

<sup>7</sup> Geoff Thale, “El Salvador Government Holds Military Officers in Custody in Jesuit Case,” Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA), 10 August 2011, [http://www.wola.org/commentary/salvadorgovernment\\_holds\\_military\\_officers\\_in\\_custody\\_in\\_jesuit\\_case](http://www.wola.org/commentary/salvadorgovernment_holds_military_officers_in_custody_in_jesuit_case)

<sup>8</sup> James Estrin, “Deporting Human Rights Abusers,” *New York Times*, 15 November 2014, [www.Lens.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/11/15/deporting-human-rights-abusers/](http://www.Lens.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/11/15/deporting-human-rights-abusers/).

than envisioned in the peace accords.<sup>9</sup> Even with the 2009 transfer of power from the rightist *Alianza Republicana Nacionalista* (Nationalist Republican Alliance, or ARENA) Party to the leftist FMLN party, the FAES's relative autonomy has not diminished; I argue it has increased. Two causal mechanisms are discussed in this paper: 1) civil-military relations and 2) militarization. Civil-military relations in the context of this thesis mean the relationship that El Salvador's civilian leadership, most notable the president, has with the FAES. The state of civil-military relations under President Mauricio Funes' administration is discussed in greater detail in Chapter III. Militarization is intended here to describe the level at which the FAES affects average Salvadorans. Militarization most obviously manifests itself in the elevated numbers of FAES troops on the streets. Militarization is discussed further in Chapter IV.

This study evaluates both the current state of civil-military relations and militarization in El Salvador in order to answer two questions: How has the state of civil-military relations in El Salvador affected the recent trend in militarization—or in El Salvador's case, re-militarization—during President Mauricio Funes' administration (2009–2014), and what have been the implications of this trend? Considering the high cost of the Salvadoran civil war and the comprehensiveness of the 1992 peace accords,<sup>10</sup> it is remarkable to witness the reemergence of the military in contemporary El Salvador. The crime wave that swept the region from the late 1990s continues to this day has forced politicians on the left and the right to place more responsibility of internal security on military forces<sup>11</sup> in violation of the constitution and the peace accords—a trend that Funes embraced throughout his term in office.

The Salvadoran Constitution and Peace Accords call for the domestic use of the FAES for emergencies only. For example, Article 168 of the Salvadoran Constitution outlines the president's responsibilities: "Exceptionally, if the regular means for maintaining internal peace, tranquility, and public order have been exhausted, the

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<sup>9</sup> Thale, "El Salvador Government."

<sup>10</sup> Bird and Williams, "El Salvador: Revolt and Negotiated Transition," 40.

<sup>11</sup> "La Situación de la Seguridad y la Justicia 2009–2014: Entre Expectativas de Cambio, Mano Dura Militar y Treguas Pandilleras," ed. Jeannette Aguilar, Instituto Universitario de Opinión Pública (San Salvador: IUDOP, 2014), 90.

President of the Republic may deploy the Armed Force for this end. The activation of the Armed Force shall be limited to the time and the measure strictly necessary for re-establishing order and shall cease as soon as this task is completed.”<sup>12</sup> The Chapultepec Peace Accords of 1992 state that “the maintenance of internal peace, tranquility, order and public security lies outside the normal functions of the armed forces as an institution responsible for national defense. The armed forces play a role in this sphere only in very exceptional circumstances, where the normal means have been exhausted.”<sup>13</sup> The use of the FAES as an emergency force has been used indefinitely since Funes took office, hardly in keeping with the letter of the law.

In 1993, only a year after the peace accords were signed, conservative ARENA President Alfredo Cristiani called on the FAES to patrol highways and coffee harvests.<sup>14</sup> A decade later, strong anti-gang policies, *mano dura* in 2003 and *super mano dura* in 2004, pushed through by ARENA President Antonio Saca, gave the PNC new powers of enhanced search and seizure, suspected gang member detention, and profiling. The PNC slowly acquired some of the capabilities of the old state security services that were abolished by the accords. In 2009, President Mauricio Funes, an FMLN candidate and proponent of seeking alternatives to *mano dura*, declared by emergency decree that the military accompany PNC foot patrols in San Salvador to control the crime problem.<sup>15</sup> The decree was renewed and extended throughout his presidency and continues today under the presidency of Salvador Sánchez Cerén. While deploying the FAES to improve citizen security is justifiable, their extended use in this capacity has weakened the legal institutional framework of El Salvador. No other long-term solution has been successful, and so the FAES remains on the streets.

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<sup>12</sup> Constitution of the Republic of El Salvador: 1983, as amended in 2003, Article 168, 12<sup>th</sup> paragraph, Constitution Finder, University of Richmond, accessed 11 October 2014, <http://confinder.richmond.edu/admin/docs/ElSalvador1983English.pdf>.

<sup>13</sup> Chapultepec Peace Accords: 1992, 16 January 1992, United Nations Peacemaker, [http://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/SV\\_920116\\_ChapultepecAgreement.pdf](http://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/SV_920116_ChapultepecAgreement.pdf).

<sup>14</sup> Charles T. Call, “Democratisation, War and State-Building: Constructing the Rule of Law in El Salvador.” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 35, (November 2003): 836.

<sup>15</sup> Clare Ribando Seelke, *El Salvador: Background and U.S. Relations* (CRS Report No. R43616), Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2014, <http://fas.org/sfp/crs/row/R43616.pdf>, 8.

I argue that it is precisely when soldiers join the police in patrolling the streets that the civil-military issue is most important. In other words, improper policy formation while the state's instruments of violence, the FAES, are in daily contact with everyday Salvadorans, produces a disproportionate effect upon society as opposed to if these forces were not present at all. Thus, civil-military relations in El Salvador, specifically the relationships at the top, shape the extent of militarization in the country. The research questions of what that relationship is and how it affects militarization matter because Salvadoran state policy may be driven by these factors. As Bruneau puts it, "At the most basic level, civil-military relations are about power, and deal with who is in fact in control in any state at any particular time."<sup>16</sup>

## **B. THESIS OVERVIEW AND CHAPTER OUTLINE**

### **1. Counter-Arguments**

This thesis assesses the civil-military relationship and the level of militarization in El Salvador, and explores the causal linkage between the two. Beyond this, I draw some insights into Salvadoran policy formation along these lines. I uncover many of the dynamics that make El Salvador both a unique case, but one also that conforms to present theories of military and society. Notwithstanding, the following hypotheses go against the assertion that the civil-military relationship has affected the level of militarization in El Salvador.

First among potential other explanations is the assertion that Salvadoran society is not militarized, or at least not to the extent that should cause alarm. Many countries around the world—including the United States—have police forces and armed government agents operating amongst the civilian populace, to include intelligence gatherers and internal security operators.

Another argument assesses that the civilian leadership in El Salvador is firmly in charge of the leadership of the armed forces, indicating on some level a healthy measure

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<sup>16</sup> Thomas C. Bruneau, "The Military in Post-Conflict Societies: Lessons from Central America and Prospects for Colombia," in *Security Sector Reform and Post-Conflict Peacebuilding*, ed. Albrecht Schnabel and Hans-Georg Ehrhart (New York: United Nations University Press, 2005), 226.

of civilian control. If El Salvador is indeed militarized, this suggests that the Salvadoran military, rather than choosing to increase its internal security role, has been thrust into the position by its political masters. Pion-Berlin asserts in the case of El Salvador that “armies cannot easily convert domestic roles into positions of political authority—even in the midst of crisis—when democratic institutions are strong and elected officials enjoy some semblance of civilian control.”<sup>17</sup> If El Salvador is not militarized, then this assertion alludes to the best case: complete civilian control at all levels. This assumes that the president exercises as much control over the leadership of the FAES as a PNC patrol commander over his mixed contingent of PNC officers and Salvadoran Army soldiers at the micro level.

The final countervailing hypothesis considered here is that there is no causal linkage between the health of the Salvadoran civil-military relationship and the degree of militarization in Salvadoran society. This claim suggests that the two phenomena occur independently. In other words, the degree of militarization is not the result of policy, but rather something at the micro-level, perhaps something cultural.

## **2. Chapter Outline**

This thesis assesses the current state of civil-military relations and militarization in El Salvador. This chapter explores the literature on civil-military relations as it pertains to the Salvadoran case. The literature review also defines militarization and explains the metrics by which militarization in El Salvador is to be assessed.

Chapter II presents the history of civil-military relations and militarization in El Salvador up to 2009. Salvadoran history, not unlike other histories, is a clash of perspectives of the peasantry, military, guerrillas, and the elite. The objective of Chapter II is to demonstrate the prevalence and importance of the military in El Salvador’s history and lay a logical path to the Funes Administration (2009–2014) to the present day.

Chapter III assesses civil military relations in El Salvador using the trinity of civil military relations as derived by the Center for Civil-Military Relations (CCMR). The

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<sup>17</sup> Pion-Berlin, “Latin American Civil-Military Relations,” 68–9.



assessment does not consider any relative gains that have been made since the peace accords in 1992—considerable to be sure—but only considers the condition of the civil-military relationship from 2009–2014.

Chapter IV assesses militarization in El Salvador. Relying heavily on the historical survey of military involvement in society presented in Chapter II, Chapter IV explores both the quantitative and qualitative measures of militarization in El Salvador.

Chapter V draws upon the assessments of civil-military relations and militarization to explore national policy implications. The chapter concludes with two specific case analyses under the Funes Administration: the gang truce of 2012 and the case of President Funes' military confidant, General David Munguía Payés.

## C. DISCUSSION

The literature on civil-military relations is extensive; that of Latin America is significant. Militarization, however, is a term that is used interchangeably and has an amorphous definition. Unfortunately, there is no science or precise form of measurement for this study. The literature on these topics is a battlefield of semantics and possesses a myriad of frameworks.

Civil-military relations, in the context of this paper, refer to the relationship that the armed forces has with civilian political leadership in El Salvador. In order to determine how the military interacts with government, one must first understand how the military fits within the superstructure of the state. The most basic conception of the military is a bureaucratic entity that serves the state. Weber envisioned professional bureaucracies as estates that serve politics, complement one another, and form the basis for the modern state.<sup>18</sup> Weber also describes how the state utilizes the military: as the “monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory.”<sup>19</sup> Weber's nineteenth century understanding of bureaucracy is the very tool through which civilians

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<sup>18</sup> Max Weber, “Politics as a Vocation,” in *Essays in Sociology*, ed. H.H. Garth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), 83–4.

<sup>19</sup> Weber, “Politics as a Vocation,” 78.

exercise control over the military—the implementer of violence. In the ideal type, Weber argues these agencies should be “fully developed bureaucratic mechanisms.”<sup>20</sup> Mares and Martínez argue that the “democratic consolidation of the armed forces is their conversion into a military administration at the service of a democratically elected government.”<sup>21</sup> From this conception, the military serves the interests of the state, but does not necessarily control those same interests.

With this understanding of how the armed forces should ideally fit into the state, the next logical step is an understanding about how the government interacts with the military. Who is in charge? Command authority aside, administering the operations and plans of the military is equally important. Yet these administrative functions are at the very center of democratic civilian control. Martínez summarizes democratic civilian control as “normalizing the existence and activities of the military administration among the public, together with the need for a comprehensive and coordinated national security strategy, in which the armed forces will, with all certainty, be one of the most important policy instruments.”<sup>22</sup> As a democracy, El Salvador must meet the requirement of true democratic civilian control. Bruneau breaks democratic civilian control of the military into four mutually supporting categories: 1) a civilianized defense ministry (MOD), 2) legislative involvement, 3) interagency cooperation, and 4) an intelligence unit that supports both the MOD and the legislature.<sup>23</sup>

Pion-Berlin summarizes the qualities of an “empowered” MOD—a sort of ideal type for all countries to strive for—one that “organizes and equips the defense forces, and prepares defense objectives, plans, strategies and even doctrines”; is constituted by a

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<sup>20</sup> Weber paraphrased in Thomas C. Bruneau and Richard B. Goetze Jr., “Ministries of Defense and Democratic Control,” in *Who Guards the Guardians and How: Democratic Civil-Military Relations*, 1st ed., ed. Thomas C. Bruneau and Scott D. Tollefson (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006), 72.

<sup>21</sup> Rafael Martínez and David R. Mares, “Introduction,” in *Debating Civil-Military Relations in Latin America*, ed. David R. Mares and Rafael Martínez (Chicago: Sussex Academic Press, 2014), 23.

<sup>22</sup> Rafael Martínez, “Objectives for Democratic Consolidation in the Armed Forces,” in *Debating Civil-Military Relations in Latin America*, ed. David R. Mares and Rafael Martínez (Chicago: Sussex Academic Press, 2014), 37.

<sup>23</sup> Thomas C. Bruneau, “Civil-military Relations in Latin America: The Hedgehog and the Fox Revisited,” *Revista Fuerzas Armadas y Sociedad* 19, no. 1 (2005), 126.

civilian minister and mostly civilian staff; creates organizational distance between military top brass and civilian power brokers; and divides the power of the armed forces through competition of the different services (army, navy, air force).<sup>24</sup> While Pion-Berlin's empowered MOD falls on the highly developed side of the democratic civilian control spectrum, Matei conceptualizes the evolution of such an entity: "Institutional control mechanisms involve providing direction and guidance for the security forces, exercised through institutions that range from organic laws and other regulations that empower the civilian leadership, to civilian-led organizations with professional staffs."<sup>25</sup>

Aside from the MOD, legislative assemblies should approve and oversee all military activities. Agüero cites the following legislative capacities: "1) conduct general policy without interference from the military, 2) define goals and general organization of national defense, 3) formulate and conduct defense policy, and 4) monitor the implementation of military policy."<sup>26</sup>

Interagency cooperation is much more than popular jargon; the free sharing of resources between the civilian and military sectors breaks down the walls of complete military autonomy. Diamint suggests that so-called third generation measures in civil-military relations necessitate, among other things, "close links between military and civilian agencies" because as "the division between military and civilian roles [fades] away," some combination of militarized police or policing military may play a role in the domestic scene.<sup>27</sup>

Lastly, having the intelligence capabilities in an agency that supports both the MOD and the legislature is what ultimately enables civilian oversight capabilities.

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<sup>24</sup> David Pion-Berlin, "Latin American Civil-Military Relations: What Progress Has Been Made?" in *Debating Civil-Military Relations in Latin America*, ed. David R. Mares and Rafael Martínez (Chicago: Sussex Academic Press, 2014), 74–5.

<sup>25</sup> Florina Cristiana Matei, "A New Conceptualization of Civil-Military Relations," in *The Routledge Handbook of Civil-Military Relations*, ed. Thomas C. Bruneau and Florina Cristiana Matei (New York: Routledge, 2013), 30.

<sup>26</sup> Felipe Agüero, "Toward Civilian Supremacy in South America," in *Consolidating the Third Wave Democracies*, ed. Larry Jay Diamond (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 177–8.

<sup>27</sup> Rut Diamint, "Latin America and the Military Question Reexamined," in *Debating Civil-Military Relations in Latin America*, ed. David R. Mares and Rafael Martínez (Chicago: Sussex Academic Press, 2014), 104.

Bruneau and Dombroski break down intelligence in very basic terms: “Since knowledge equals power, it is important to specify who may see the intelligence and in what form.”<sup>28</sup> The authors further elaborate that the continued operation of the intelligence service outside the purview of democratic civilian control in pursuit of “perceived internal threats... tends to emphasize national security matters over social welfare policies, thus creating the preconditions for the emergence of a more autonomous and less accountable security intelligence apparatus.”<sup>29</sup>

Democratic civilian control alone does not lend a complete picture of civil-military relations. How does one assess whether the FAES have satisfied the missions and roles assigned to them? Specifically in the case of El Salvador, well-beyond the consolidating democracy phase, the FAES’s performance should be measured in terms of effectiveness. The argument is no longer whether the military will usurp control—preoccupations of civil-military scholars of the authoritarian years of the 1970s–80s—as many of the conditions for military rule have vanished.<sup>30</sup> In other words, for El Salvador under the recent FMLN leadership, control and administration is just half of the puzzle. As Bruneau suggests, what is needed is a model that “balances democratic oversight and control of military affairs, efficiency in defense spending, and the effectiveness of military forces.”<sup>31</sup> Bruneau conceives this model as the trinity of civil-military relations.

Bruneau’s trinity is the central tool for analysis of civil-military relations in this paper. The trinity involves effectiveness, efficiency, and democratic civilian control (already described). This model is ideal for El Salvador because it establishes who is in

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<sup>28</sup> Thomas C. Bruneau and Kenneth R. Dombroski, “Reforming Intelligence: The Challenge of Control in New Democracies,” in *Who Guards the Guardians and How: Democratic Civil-Military Relations*, 1st ed., ed. Thomas C. Bruneau and Scott D. Tollefson (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2006), 162.

<sup>29</sup> Bruneau and Dombroski, “Reforming Intelligence,” 155.

<sup>30</sup> Carlos Waisman, “Series Editor’s Preface,” in *Debating Civil-Military Relations in Latin America*, ed. David R. Mares and Rafael Martínez (Chicago: Sussex Academic Press, 2014), XI.

<sup>31</sup> Thomas C. Bruneau and Harold A. Trinkunas, “Global Trends and Their Impact on Civil-Military Relations,” in *Global Politics of Defense Reform*, ed. Thomas C. Bruneau and Harold A. Trinkunas, 1st ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 4.

control of the military and whether the military performs the functions assigned to it and within a budget. Like most Central American countries, El Salvador has had a long history of independent military violence and government oppression. Knowing that elected officials are in charge of the armed forces, and that those same officials create and evaluate missions and budgets for said military is of the utmost importance.

Effectiveness is the ability of the armed forces to implement the roles and missions assigned to it by civilians in charge.<sup>32</sup> Pion-Berlin and Trinkunas argue that effectiveness is ultimately achieved once civilian leadership recovers from their “attention deficits” in areas of national defense.<sup>33</sup> Pion-Berlin envisions the ideal of effectiveness being military commanders who listen to their civilian leaders and “use their authority to set the innovations in motion down through the chain of command; who can promote young officers more open minded to change; and who can remove the old guard who stand in the way.”<sup>34</sup>

The third and final pillar of the trinity, efficiency, is the ability of the military to conduct its roles and missions in a cost effective manner.<sup>35</sup> Giraldo stresses that “civilians have abdicated their responsibility to provide for national security when setting spending levels and have permitted excessive military autonomy.”<sup>36</sup> This paper assesses the manner in which civilians oversee military outlays.

Effectiveness and efficiency, taken together with democratic civilian control are then used and applied to the armed forces’ roles and missions—terms that will be clarified here. As Bruneau notes, “civilian leaders are rediscovering the importance of the armed forces. The issue is, however, whether civilians are able to determine the roles and

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<sup>32</sup> Bruneau, “Hedgehog and the Fox Revisited,” 123. See also Bruneau and Trinkunas, “Global Trends,” 10.

<sup>33</sup> David Pion-Berlin and Harold Trinkunas, “Attention Deficits: Why Politicians Ignore Defense Policy in Latin America,” *Latin American Research Review* 42, no. 3 (2007): 97.

<sup>34</sup> David Pion-Berlin, “The Challenge to Reform Defense,” in *Global Politics of Defense Reform*, ed. Thomas C. Bruneau and Harold A. Trinkunas, 1st ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 272.

<sup>35</sup> Bruneau, “Hedgehog and the Fox Revisited,” 123.

<sup>36</sup> Jeanne Kinney Giraldo, “Defense Budgets, Democratic Civilian Control, and Effective Governance,” in *Who Guards the Guardians and How: Democratic Civil-Military Relations*, 1st ed., ed. Thomas C. Bruneau and Scott D. Tollefson (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006), 183.

missions of the armed forces.”<sup>37</sup> Shemella provides a good understanding of roles and missions, terms used very loosely when describing the armed forces. He cites the Pentagon’s definition: a role is “‘a broad and enduring purpose’ provided by the Congress to each branch of the armed services” while missions are “specific tasks that clearly indicate an action to be taken.”<sup>38</sup> This concept is directly applicable to the current state of military affairs in Central America as politicians focus on altering the military’s *role*, something that has enduring consequences, when they should merely be assigning or managing specific military *missions*. Diamint throws role and mission confusion into relief by asserting that “the armed forces in several Latin American countries do not have specific functions.”<sup>39</sup> This sort of undefined status leaves both civilian and military leadership looking for relevance for the armed forces. Mares and Martínez warn that the military role should provide “the state with one part, outside its borders, of its monopoly of violence...Otherwise, an opportunism or misguided pragmatism could lead us to settle for what we have and resign ourselves to levels of autonomy, and even power, for the armed forces that are unacceptable in a democracy.”<sup>40</sup>

The second main goal of this thesis is to identify the level of militarization in El Salvador. The front page of *La Prensa Gráfica* usually features a crime scene with masked PNC officers holding semiautomatic rifles. One might conclude that El Salvador is militarized based on what they read and watch in the news. Indeed, this analysis touches on what can be drawn from media photography and archival evidence. Yet, an analysis of militarization must draw on more than just pictures; in order to address this issue, a workable definition must be derived. Sotomayor defines militarization as the “adoption and use of military models, methods, concepts, doctrines, procedures, and

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<sup>37</sup> Bruneau, “Military in Post-Conflict Societies,” 228.

<sup>38</sup> Paul Shemella, “The Spectrum of Roles and Missions of the Armed Forces,” in *Who Guards the Guardians and How: Democratic Civil-Military Relations*, 1st ed., ed. Thomas C. Bruneau and Scott D. Tollefson (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006), 123.

<sup>39</sup> Diamint, “Latin America and the Military Question Reexamined,” 113.

<sup>40</sup> Martínez and Mares, “Introduction,” 23.

personnel in police activities, thus giving a military character to public safety (and public space) questions.”<sup>41</sup>

Lowy and Sader define militarization in terms of colonization:

The militarization of the state is not simply the transition from the purely military to the political, but the overwhelming of the state apparatus as a whole by the armed forces—in essence the “colonization” of the majority of state and state-related structures (at the apex of the pyramid) by the military and the partial or total fusion of the repressive apparatuses with other apparatuses of the system of political domination.<sup>42</sup>

This definition of militarization is complete insofar as describing the way in which a state is infiltrated by the military, but does not address the cultural aspect of militarization: how does the military’s presence affect the citizenry? Williams and Walter, who concur with Lowy and Sader’s definition, add that

militarization is not only limited to the state level; it also can occur at the micro level of everyday life... The military’s exercise of social control at the micro level can provide it with a “loyal” political clientele that ensures its continued control of the state. Militarization generally occurs at the micro level when the state is incapable of achieving hegemony in the Gramscian sense— i.e., it is unable to generate societal consensus. In such instances, the armed forces use coercion to guarantee the state’s political domination<sup>43</sup>

Chapter II expounds on the history of militarization in El Salvador up to 2009. In the case of El Salvador, militarization has taken a special hold in heavily agricultural areas where suppression by military police is commonplace.<sup>44</sup> El Salvador, a country with a long history of agro-export in coffee, is no stranger to this model. Vickers summarizes the proliferation of militarization in Salvadoran society in the decades leading up to the peace accords:

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<sup>41</sup> Sotomayor draws on Zavarucha in Arturo C. Sotomayor, “Militarization in Mexico and Its Implications,” in *The State and Security in Mexico: Transformation and Crisis in Regional Perspective*, ed. Brian Bow and Arturo Santa-Cruz (New York: Routledge, 2012), 43.

<sup>42</sup> Michael Lowy and Eder Sader, “The Militarization of the State in Latin America,” *Latin American Perspectives* 12, no. 4 (1985): 9.

<sup>43</sup> Philip J. Williams and Knut Walter, *Militarization and Demilitarization in El Salvador’s Transition to Democracy* (Pittsburgh: University Press, 1997), 7.

<sup>44</sup> Williams and Walter, *Militarization and Demilitarization*.

Three branches of the armed forces carried out internal security functions: the National Police and the Treasury Police, which operated primarily in urban areas, and the National Guard, which operated in rural areas... A separate National Intelligence Directorate gathered intelligence information and targeted suspected guerrilla sympathizers. Police officers were trained in the military academy with a doctrinal emphasis on anticommunism and counterinsurgency. Officers moved freely between security forces and regular army assignments.<sup>45</sup>

In order to measure militarization during the Funes Administration, this thesis evaluates both quantitative and qualitative metrics of FAES soldiers on the street, while relying heavily on the historical survey of El Salvador. Perhaps the leading scholar in terms of quantitative measures of militarization is Bowman. Bowman asserts that “high levels of militarization result in low levels of formal democracy in Latin America.”<sup>46</sup> He contends that Latin America has always been prone to “praetorian” leadership from the military that, for lack of an external mission, focuses solely on keeping its own citizens in line through coercive means.<sup>47</sup> To measure militarization, Bowman uses military spending as a percent of GDP and what he describes as the participation ratio or the number of soldiers per 1,000 inhabitants.<sup>48</sup> Measuring the military budget as a percent of GDP demonstrates the government’s relative commitment to the armed forces, and thus its peoples’ commitment.

This study also considers photographic evidence of militarization in El Salvador. While photographs can be just as biased as writing, they nevertheless are part of the overall narrative. In Chapter IV, I have laid out several photographs from El Salvador’s relatively politically neutral daily which aspects of the daily effect of militarization can be seen.

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<sup>45</sup> George R. Vickers, “Renegotiating Internal Security: The Lessons of Central America,” in *Comparative Peace Processes in Latin America*, ed. Cynthia Arnson (Stanford, CA: University Press, 1999), 394.

<sup>46</sup> Kirk S. Bowman, “Taming the Tiger: Militarization and Democracy in Latin America,” *Journal of Peace Research* 33, no. 3 (1996): 291.

<sup>47</sup> Bowman, “Taming the Tiger,” 291–2.

<sup>48</sup> Bowman, “Taming the Tiger,” 293.



Chapter IV also lays out the security environment from 2009–2014. As already mentioned, this study of militarization relies heavily on the historical survey and present context. For instance, in order to understand the nature of the FAES patrols in San Salvador, it is necessary to understand the conditions that have led to their involvement. This section reviews the magnitude of the threat and the response, in terms of finances and manpower.

Bowman's metric provides a start. The number or duration of Salvadoran Army patrols also offers some basis for analysis. A comparative study of other Central American countries or other twenty-year-old democracies might derive the relative location of El Salvador on a scale of militarization, but this provides little value when considering the connection between Salvadoran civil-military relations and militarization. Different civil-military relationships exist in other countries, so a precise connection cannot be established. As such, this study considers militarization as the present volume of military involvement in Salvadoran state security relative to its past.

From this perspective, I will approach the analysis of the state of militarization in El Salvador. Again, statistics alone are telling of a highly militarized society, but the particulars of the Salvadoran case are washed out in them. In order to better understand the extent of militarization in El Salvador, a cultural element to the study of militarization is required. Only by understanding how individual Salvadorans have adapted to generations of militarization will one grasp its implications.

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## II. HISTORY OF THE SALVADORAN MILITARY

This history of Salvadoran civil-military relations and militarization has evolved from one primarily steeped in alliances between the military and landholding elites to one centered around using the FAES as a political promise to improve citizen security in the more dangerous zones of El Salvador. The agro-export model, conceived during the Spanish colonial era, ripened over the centuries under European and U.S. influence. The landholding elites in Central America created Western-style nations, and in so doing, founded armies to ensure state sovereignty and integrity. Ostensibly, to serve the state impartially, the new professional organ of the armed forces sought patrons and relevance during the years of military rule (1932–1979).<sup>49</sup> While land distribution and social reconstruction occurred in Costa Rica, El Salvador (in addition to Honduras and Guatemala) remained relatively untouched. During the Salvadoran Civil War (1979–1992), the landed elite-military alliance shifted largely in part due to external and internal pressures; the end of the Cold War removed the necessity for the United States to prop up an anti-communist regime while internal pressure from business elites to improve El Salvador’s economic environment forced the Salvadoran state to reassess its relationship with the military. Immediately after the signing of the 1992 peace accords, as the military diminished by half—some 63,170 FAES personnel in 1992 to some 30,500 in 1994—the FAES sought new political bedfellows and relevance.<sup>50</sup> With the rise of a variety of domestic insecurity challenges shortly following the peace accords, the military regained some prominence as a state actor while still maintaining a certain modicum of autonomy. The following historical narrative covers the evolution of the Salvadoran military and is broken up into three general survey periods: military rule (1932–1979), the civil war (1979–1992), and democratization and *mano dura* (1992–2009). The period of FMLN leadership (2009–2014), the main period of analysis for this thesis, is covered in more depth in Chapters III through V.

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<sup>49</sup> Adam Isacson, *Altered States: Security and Demilitarization in Central America* (Washington, DC: Center for International Policy and the Arias Foundation for Peace and Human Progress, 1997), vi.

<sup>50</sup> Call, “Democratisation,” 835.

## A. MILITARY RULE: 1932–1979

The landed elite planted coffee on their plantations in the 20th century when the indigo of the previous centuries no longer sold at market. While the crops changed, the ruling elite did not. As Perez-Brignoli states, the elite entered “into a ‘zero-sum’ power struggle... in which the gains of a few imply total loss or the many.”<sup>51</sup> As a necessary adjunct to the maintenance of a plantation-export economy, those in power relied on largely coercive measures to maintain the status quo or whenever their privileges were questioned.<sup>52</sup> Perhaps the most notorious such violent juncture occurred in 1932, the year that peasant and communist Augustín Farabundo Martí fomented insurrection. Martí provided the elite an opportunity to test the new implement of the state: the FAES. The Salvadoran Army responded in what is now known as *la Matanza*; soldiers massacred approximately 17,000 Salvadorans in the span of three weeks. As a result of *la Matanza*, Wood argues that “the fervently anticommunist elites identified any progressive social policy as a threat [and] worked with hardline elements of the military to defeat reformist efforts.”<sup>53</sup>

During the Great Depression, the military served a larger purpose than henchmen for the elites. After the failure of revolution and reform in 1932, General Maximiliano Hernández Martínez governed El Salvador from 1932–1944. Stanley asserts that Martínez perfected the “protection racket state,” whereby he “was in a position to manipulate elite perceptions [and]... defend [elites] from a threat that he either provoked or made to seem greater than it was.”<sup>54</sup> The protection racket gave the military much more than autonomy: the ability to manipulate their makers. Under the Salvadoran Army’s 60-year tenure, Finer’s simple conundrum rings true: “The wonder... is not why

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<sup>51</sup> Brignoli, *Brief History of Central America*, 8.

<sup>52</sup> Edelberto Torres-Rivas, “Foundations: Central America,” in *Democracy in Latin America: (Re)Constructing Political Society*, ed. Manuel A. Garretón Merino and Edward Newman (New York: United Nations University Press, 2001), 100.

<sup>53</sup> Elisabeth Jean Wood, *Forging Democracy from Below: Insurgent Transitions in South Africa and El Salvador* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 26.

<sup>54</sup> Stanley, *Protection Racket State*, 56–7.

[the military] rebels against its civilian masters, but why it ever obeys them.”<sup>55</sup> If the military were any other organization, it would have merely striven to survive and expand within the state apparatus; uniquely poised with the state sanctioned arsenal of violence and national esteem, the military sought more.

Tilly argues that wars make states and states make wars: “War making, extraction, and capital accumulation interacted to shape European state making.”<sup>56</sup> Following Tilly’s line of logic, the Salvadoran military grew commensurate with the state. Yet, as Centeno argues, the European pattern of state-building did not work in Latin America. He argues that Latin America embodies “limited states” that engage in “limited war,” the fruit of which are the acceptance of colonialism and hegemonic control externally and divided elites, race and class divisions, and post-colonial chaos internally.<sup>57</sup> Therefore, what is left is the deadly implement of state power in the midst of an incomplete state. In the context of El Salvador, Stanley argues that General Martínez and his followers “used analogous protection against internal enemies to increase their call on the resources of capital and strengthen the claim of militaries, rather than civilians, to control over the state.”<sup>58</sup> The Salvadoran military operated with impunity and coercion leading up through the years of the civil war, tamping down on several possible openings for reform.

Martínez’s bid for power—well-received at the onset of the Great Depression and falling commodities prices—the military established control of El Salvador to ensure stability. The Salvadoran state permeated the countryside in the form of mandatory military conscription. El Salvador adopted the modern European military model of near universal military conscription; like the layers of an onion, tranches of the male population served in the various active, reserve, and guard components.<sup>59</sup> Walter and

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<sup>55</sup> S. E. Finer, *The Man on Horseback: The Role of the Military in Politics* (London: Pall Mall Press Limited, 1962), 6.

<sup>56</sup> Charles Tilly, “War Making and State Making as Organized Crime,” in *Bringing the State Back In*, ed. Peter Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol (Cambridge: University Press, 1985), 172.

<sup>57</sup> These attributes taken from Table 1.1 in Miguel Angel Centeno, *Blood and Debt: War and the Nation-State in Latin America* (University Park, PA: University Press, 2003), 23.

<sup>58</sup> Stanley, *Protection Racket State*, 36.

<sup>59</sup> Knut Walter and Philip J. Williams, “The Military and Democratization in El Salvador,” *Journal of International Studies and World Affairs* 35, no. 1 (1993): 42.

Williams describe the extensive nature of the rural military network as follows:

The Salvadoran countryside, especially coffee-growing areas, had come largely under military control or surveillance by 1930. The *Guardia Nacional* together with the *comandantes locales* and their *escoltas militares*, plus a considerable number of troops in reserve, constituted a parallel power structure that could easily challenge other local and national authorities, such as the *alcaldes*, the urban police, the state's ministries, and even the president of the republic himself.<sup>60</sup>

Many Salvadorans served in the army, which in addition to professional military training and combat duty meant participation in internal state infrastructural projects. National guard units and other military organizations, more loosely affiliated with the state, extended even further into the peasantry: *patrullas cantonales*, *escoltas militares*, and *Guardia Cívica* were all organizations that added to the number of military and reserve units, sometimes overlapping, and provided extensive means by which the state had access to nearly every man, woman, and child in El Salvador.<sup>61</sup> These militarized units, by and large, owed their loyalty to local commanders, who in turn owed their loyalty to local landowners. The result of the military stratification of Salvadoran society is a chain of command from the lowliest coffee picker to the chief general of the Salvadoran Army.

In the analysis of the military and the landed-elite, one must acknowledge that these were not homogenous blocs. Actors within the military chose to support the elite; naturally, those who aligned with the landed class were more senior in rank and who benefited most highly from the relationship. The military was challenged on several occasions by junior officers—closer to the working class—within its ranks to pursue land and social reform. The most notable example of such a struggle was the overthrow of General Carlos Humberto Romero in 1979. Romero, fraudulently installed in 1977, persisted in the military's unsuccessful and widely unpopular policy of subordinating agrarian interests to that of a new industrial class.<sup>62</sup> While Romero and others in the right

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<sup>60</sup> Stanley, *Protection Racket State*, 17.

<sup>61</sup> Stanley, *Protection Racket State*, 29.

<sup>62</sup> Stanley, *Protection Racket State*, 73.

wing conservative faction of the military intrigued with civilian elites, others in the FAES, military intelligentsia, and military run police units (the National Guard, the Treasury Police, and the National Police), simply sold their mercenary services.<sup>63</sup> The result of an inwardly conflicted military apparatus was a bloodbath of violence and repression against any and all challengers. In the end, the junior officers allied with other reform-minded civilians and senior officers in a coup against Romero.

One notable feature of the military that played a fundamental role in El Salvador's history is the presence of generational classes known as *tandas*. These officers rise up through the ranks together and typically share similar views and experiences. In militaries that are firmly under civilian control, the intrigues of these officers are insignificant in terms of national policy. However, in the case of El Salvador after the Romero coup, one particular *tanda* known as the *Equipo Molina*, which graduated from 1956–1958 and formed the high command in 1979, played a very influential role in history. Unfortunately the governing military juntas that resulted from the reform-oriented 1979 coup were already infiltrated with right-wing conservative military officers of the *Equipo Molina*—Colonel Jaime Abdul Gutiérrez, Colonel José Guillermo García, and Colonel Nicolás Carranza—who undermined its agenda and ultimately steered El Salvador to civil war.<sup>64</sup>

Up to this point, the discussion has considered the structural alliance of the military and the coffee-growing elite. There existed other actors, as well. Indeed, a growing movement sought to have their voice heard in an environment bereft of political space.<sup>65</sup> The successful guerrilla action in Cuba simultaneously generated hope for guerrilla movements throughout Latin America while at the same time frightening the conservative right into further repression. After the Cuban Revolution and the importation of the Cold War into the Western Hemisphere, militarized peasantry served as a bulwark against communism and land reform. Landowning elites and military leaders alike played up the threat of the specter of communist subversion in order to

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<sup>63</sup> Stanley, *Protection Racket State*, 72.

<sup>64</sup> Stanley, *Protection Racket State*, 151.

<sup>65</sup> Torres-Rivas, "Foundations," 100.

ensure international support for conservative regimes under military control. Stanley remarks that “US doctrines for how allied states should go about defending themselves against potential internal enemies dovetailed perfectly with the institutions and ideology of class oppression that were already in place.”<sup>66</sup> International funding and proxy conflict, new to the region in the latter half of the 20th century, meant a wellspring of funding and support for the Salvadoran military. Weapons technologies from radios to rifles proliferated in El Salvador during the crusade against the militant left. While mature democracies utilized these technologies to enhance legitimate policing practices, many Latin American states, El Salvador among them, used them to improve their coercive powers.<sup>67</sup>

Security intelligence agencies began to track the movements of subversives and eliminate potential problems. During the 1960s and 1970s, the rural National Guard, the urban National Police, and the Treasury Police were El Salvador’s three main security agencies. Stanley points out that these agencies “tended to maintain close mercenary relationships with landowners and business elites and shared with them an intense, self-serving anticommunism.”<sup>68</sup> The intelligence apparatus possessed informants in all the local departments. The development of a coercive intelligence network sparked resistance to the state in the form of guerrilla activity.

Salvadoran guerrilla movements were fragmented and worked at cross purposes before the civil war. They were the *Partido Comunista de El Salvador* (Communist Party of El Salvador, or PCS), the *Fuerzas Populares de Liberación Farabundo Martí* (Farabundo Martí Popular Liberation Forces, or FLP), the *Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo* (People’s Revolutionary Army, or ERP), and the *Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores Centroamericanos* (Revolutionary Workers’ Party of Central America, or PRTC). The government’s brutal actions at the outset of the civil war galvanized these

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<sup>66</sup> Stanley, *Protection Racket State*, 39–40.

<sup>67</sup> Mark Ungar, *Policing Democracy: Overcoming Obstacles to Citizen Security in Latin America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), 4.

<sup>68</sup> Stanley, *Protection Racket State*, 72.



disparate groups into one: the FMLN.<sup>69</sup> Invoking the legend of the revolutionary peasant leader Agustín Farabundo Martí Rodríguez, martyred by the military government of President Hernández Martínez in 1932, the FMLN armed itself and fought back. Not unlike guerrilla movements throughout Latin America, the countryside became a game of checkers while the military apparatus and the guerrillas competed for the hearts and minds of Salvadorans, sometimes through civic action, often through coercion.<sup>70</sup>

While the leadership of the FMLN was mostly composed of college students, much of the rank and file came from the peasantry of the coffee fields. Most joined because of their experiences with the government, and many were organized secretly by Catholic priests.<sup>71</sup> Additionally, the guerrillas received training and weapons from Cuba and Vietnam among other Soviet bloc states.<sup>72</sup> The excessively coercive state security complex drove a wedge between the traditional position of the Salvadoran conscript's loyalty to the state and his desire to protect what belonged to him. The rift only grew wider the more the state tried to suppress the FMLN.<sup>73</sup> The magnitude of the state's repression at the outset of the civil war is revealed in the ability of the FMLN to actually function; the FMLN did not exhibit the same ideological homogeneity as other guerrilla groups in Latin America, being constituted by five previous guerrilla movements.<sup>74</sup> The magnitude of the challenge forced them to work together.

## **B. CIVIL WAR: 1979–1992**

Unfortunately, the Salvadoran Civil War occurred after the failure of a short-lived idealistic military coup of junior officers. These young officers succeeded in making

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<sup>69</sup> Salvador Martí i Puig, "Political Parties: the Left," in *Handbook of Central American Governance*, ed. Diego Sánchez-Ancochea and Salvador Martí i Puig (New York: Routledge, 2014), 237.

<sup>70</sup> José Angel Moroni Bracamonte, *Strategy and Tactics of the Salvadoran FMLN Guerrillas: Last Battle of the Cold War, Blueprint for Future Conflicts* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1995), 50.

<sup>71</sup> Cynthia McClintock, *Revolutionary Movements in Latin America: El Salvador's FMLN and Peru's Shining Path* (Washington, DC: U.S. Institute of Peace, 1998), 268–70.

<sup>72</sup> Hugh Byrne, *El Salvador's Civil War: A Study of Revolution* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1996), 77.

<sup>73</sup> Stanley, *Protection Racket State*, 110.

<sup>74</sup> Cynthia McClintock, *Revolutionary Movements in Latin America: El Salvador's FMLN and Peru's Shining Path* (Washington, DC: U.S. Institute of Peace, 1998), 48.

inroads with the political left who chafed under decades of military rule. In a quick, well-coordinated, and bloodless action, the junior officers deposed President Carlos Humberto Romero. Idealism and reform seemed to be within the political left's grasp. Yet when the momentum of the movement stalled, and divisions arose once again between the left and military conservatives, all hands abandoned the junta to failure. The resulting civilian government, forged through a series of pacts, allowed for the facade of a democratic opening to form under the *Partido Demócrata Cristiano* (Cristian Democratic Party, or PDC). In this case, Williams and Walter's assertion applies, that "even when the armed forces return to the barracks after a period of military rule, they still may be able to protect or even expand their entrenchment in post-authoritarian political structures."<sup>75</sup>

The PDC derived some legitimacy in light of the broad pact they struck with the military, as well as several broad concessions from the military; yet the military may have gained more. Their entry into the pact and their eventual return to the barracks placed them in favor of the United States, eager to support a democratic regime in the face of the mounting leftist guerrilla threat.<sup>76</sup> Indeed, the United States applied a good deal of pressure on the Salvadoran military to curb their widely publicized death squad activities in an effort to make sure that counterinsurgency funding would not get tied up in the U.S. Congress.<sup>77</sup> Williams and Walter allege that "despite the contributions that such pacts can make in furthering a transition from authoritarian rule... given the small number of participants involved, pacts are inherently undemocratic."<sup>78</sup>

In one grim testament to the ferocity to which militarization gave rise to murder, a right-wing vigilante group known as the White Warriors, purportedly upset over members of the Catholic clergy encouraging land reform, circulated a pamphlet in 1977 with the slogan "Be a patriot! Kill a priest!"<sup>79</sup> The government's antagonism to those

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<sup>75</sup> Williams and Walter, *Militarization and Demilitarization*, 7.

<sup>76</sup> Stanley, *Protection Racket State*, 184; also see Williams and Walter, *Militarization and Demilitarization*, 10–11 and 104.

<sup>77</sup> Stanley, *Protection Racket State*, 228.

<sup>78</sup> Williams and Walter, *Militarization and Demilitarization*, 128.

<sup>79</sup> Walter LaFeber, *Inevitable Revolutions: The United States in Central America* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1984), 222.

Catholic priests allegedly practicing so-called liberation theology in the countryside spurned on the efforts of many priests to organize guerrilla resistance. The Catholic network in El Salvador was critical to resistance efforts.<sup>80</sup> One event in particular in March 1980 caused a surge in guerrilla membership: the assassination of Archbishop Oscar Romero—in 2015 a candidate for sainthood—while he was saying mass.<sup>81</sup> While not directly linked to the guerrillas, Romero was a highly influential and outspoken critic of the violence waged by the government against the poor. His martyrdom did not advance the government's position.

A few months after the Romero slaying, another violation against American citizens rocked U.S. support for the FAES. Four U.S. missionaries in El Salvador, three Catholic nuns and a fourth laywoman were raped and dumped in a shallow grave in December 1980.<sup>82</sup> President Carter suspended military aid to the FAES, but only for a short period due to the backlash of conservatives who claimed Central America was falling into communist revolution.<sup>83</sup>

After decades of intense repression, acute social and economic inequality, the blatant hijacking of any hopes of reform, and the failure of the 1979 Military Junta, the FMLN resorted to violence against the Salvadoran military in January 1981.<sup>84</sup> In return, the military waged a dirty war against anyone and everyone who was suspected of supporting the guerrilla movement. This thrust elevated the FMLN to prominence and plunged El Salvador into civil war. The military, in an effort to maintain their predominance and institutional alliances, used unknown numbers of clandestine forces to intimidate the opposition through imprisonment, torture, disappearances, and murder.

A year after the slaying of the American missionaries, although subdued in its international media exposure, the most prominent example of the FAES's abuse of coercive power occurred: the massacre of El Mozote. An allegedly U.S. trained

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<sup>80</sup> Wood, *Forging Democracy from Below*, 49.

<sup>81</sup> McClintock, *Revolutionary Movements*, 268–9.

<sup>82</sup> Stanley, *Protection Racket State*, 214.

<sup>83</sup> Estrin, "Deporting Human Rights Abusers."

<sup>84</sup> Mo Hume, "El Salvador," in *Handbook of Central American Governance*, ed. Diego Sánchez-Ancochea and Salvador Martí I Puig (New York: Routledge, 2014), 386.

Salvadoran Army battalion murdered the inhabitants of an entire village in northeastern El Salvador in December 1981. The incident demonstrated to both Salvadorans and the world the extent to which the military and the conservative elite would go to crush the FMLN. Under pressure to demonstrate some semblance of democracy, the right-wing elite spawned the ARENA party in 1981. ARENA quickly rose to dominate the legislature and in 1989, the first ARENA president took office, Alfredo Cristiani. In the early years of the civil war, ARENA was closely allied with the military. In 1983, a new Salvadoran constitution established that all responsibility of internal and external security belonged to the Salvadoran military.<sup>85</sup>

The alliance between the FAES and El Salvador's traditional elite started to dissipate, particularly as the political relevance of the latter waned. The Salvadoran Civil War did not occur in a vacuum. Indeed the external forces of globalization, neoliberal market reform, and the end of the Cold War largely upset existing socio-economic power structures. As Torres-Rivas states, "the landowners' economic interests were refocused in light of new marketing opportunities and the determining factors of the new international capitalism."<sup>86</sup> This new rising class saw the ugliness and fruitlessness of the FAES's efforts inside El Salvador, and almost more importantly, saw the detrimental pariah status attached to the country in light of catastrophes like El Mozote. By the end of the 1980s, the ARENA Party had realized that the FAES, particularly the intelligence security apparatus, was too costly an ally in terms of both ending the civil war and demonstrating progress for El Salvador.<sup>87</sup>

It is impossible to discuss the civil war without commenting on the unnaturally long staying power of the FAES and the FMLN. The success of the Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua in 1979 confirmed U.S. Cold War policymakers' worst fears that the specter of communism was closing in. With the domino theory thus confirmed, the U.S. government under President Ronald Reagan went to astronomical heights to provide the

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<sup>85</sup> Vickers, "Renegotiating Internal Security," 394.

<sup>86</sup> Torres-Rivas, "Foundations," 111.

<sup>87</sup> Cynthia J. Arnson, "Introduction," in *Comparative Peace Processes in Latin America*, ed. Cynthia Arnson (Stanford, CA: University Press, 1999), 16.

Salvadoran government under the PDC and later the ARENA Party with the funding necessary to vanquish the opposition. Under the Reagan Doctrine, anything that resembled revolution in the Western Hemisphere was labeled pink and unauthorized. With the ghost of Cuba and the more recent loss of Nicaragua to the Sandinistas, the United States would not allow another domino to fall to the Soviets. The United States loaned El Salvador \$3.2 billion in economic aid and \$1.1 billion more in military aid during the course of the war.<sup>88</sup> The United States dumped an average \$1.3 billion annually into Central America in the 1980s.<sup>89</sup>

In light of these figures, it is doubtful that the FAES could have waged such an enduring struggle without U.S. support. Further, the presence of such support initiated a proxy war, pouring Soviet weapons into El Salvador via Cuba and Nicaragua. Under the tutelage and support of U.S. advisors, the FAES waged counterinsurgency operations in El Salvador against the leftist FMLN guerrillas. Like hard-pressed guerrillas elsewhere, the FMLN embraced weapons and support where they could get them. Ultimately, the Salvadoran Civil War embodied the self-fulfilling prophecy of the Cold War in a microcosm, virtually militarizing the entire country.

An enduring legacy of the Salvadoran Civil War was the mass exodus of Salvadorans, fleeing the country to find safety abroad, mostly in the United States. Additionally, the internal population shifted as still more peasants flocked to the outskirts of San Salvador in an effort to escape the violence in the countryside. Migration to urban environments began in earnest in the 1960s, most notably with the breakout of the Soccer War with Honduras in 1969. Much of the migration had to do with the influx of cheap manufactured goods as much as the untenable conditions for peasants in the countryside.<sup>90</sup> In 1950, for example, 36.5 percent of the national population lived in

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<sup>88</sup> Call, "Democratisation," 831.

<sup>89</sup> Figure adjusted to 2012 U.S. dollars, found in Peter J. Meyer and Clare Ribando Seelke, *Central America Regional Security Initiative: Background and Policy Issues for Congress* (CRS Report No. R41731), Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2014, <http://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R41731.pdf>, 1.

<sup>90</sup> Thomas P. Anderson, *The War of the Dispossessed: Honduras, El Salvador, 1969* (Lincoln, NE: University Press, 1981), 34.

cities; by 2010, that figure jumped to 64.3 percent.<sup>91</sup> The growth of urban poor is certainly not unique to El Salvador or even Central America, yet for the small, relatively resource poor and population rich country, the trend poses significant challenges.

The tipping point of the war finally came in November 1989 when members of the Atlacatl Battalion of the Salvadoran Army, with orders to covertly silence Jesuit professor and activist Ignacio Ellacuría, assassinated the priest along with five other Jesuits, their housekeeper, and her sixteen year old daughter, Celina.<sup>92</sup> Soon thereafter, the public outcry in the United States—in 1990 with some 650,000 Salvadoran immigrants<sup>93</sup>—prompted an extensive Congressional investigation and strong condemnation of El Salvador. It is nearly impossible to fathom the events that led to such a seemingly irrational action as that against Ellacuría and the others. Stanley explains that “from the hardliners’ point of view, negotiations would be unnecessary if the military were winning, and the military was so far not winning only because the *gringos* kept it from fighting as it should.”<sup>94</sup>

The FMLN launched its largest offensive of the war in response to the high profile slayings and occupied several areas of San Salvador. This was part of the FMLN’s two-pronged approach of both political and military pressure to push for a negotiated settlement.<sup>95</sup> The Salvadoran Army, unable to expel the guerrillas, ceded to a stalemate. Arnson summarizes the fallout that the Salvadoran military reaped:

[The U.S. Congress] ultimately implicated the army chief of staff and other top officers in the decision to kill the priests. The work of the task force led Congress to adopt an unprecedented 50 percent cut in aid to the Salvadoran Army in 1990. If, during the Cold War, Congress was willing to overlook major human rights abuses for the sake of combatting

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<sup>91</sup> Data from CELADE 2010 survey, found in Ricardo Jordan, “Urban Sustainability in Latin America and the Caribbean,” United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, 7 January 2013, 13.

<sup>92</sup> Stanley, *Protection Racket State*, 247–8.

<sup>93</sup> Figure derived from Seth Motel and Eileen Patten, “Hispanics of Salvadoran Origin in the United States, 2010,” *Pew Research Hispanic Trends Project*, June 27, 2012, <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2012/06/27/hispanics-of-salvadoran-origin-in-the-united-states-2010/>.

<sup>94</sup> Stanley, *Protection Racket State*, 248.

<sup>95</sup> Teresa Whitfield, “The Role of the United Nations in El Salvador and Guatemala: A Preliminary Comparison,” in *Comparative Peace Processes in Latin America*, ed. Cynthia Arnson (Stanford, CA: University Press, 1999), 262.

communist insurgents, no such imperative held U.S. policy together following the Cold War's end. Aid cuts furthered the political isolation of the Salvadoran military. By signaling the breakdown of consensus over El Salvador policy, the aid cuts also pressured the Bush Administration to support a negotiated settlement.<sup>96</sup>

While foreign interference may have prolonged the war, foreign influence certainly assisted in El Salvador's recovery during and after the peace accords.

## **C. DEMOCRATIZATION AND *MANO DURA*: 1992–2009**

### **1. ONUSAL and Demobilization**

Democratic and non-democratic governments took notice when UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Gali officially observed the signing of the peace accords in Chapultepec Castle in Mexico. The FAES had demonstrated such villainy during the war that the fundamental provisions of the accords had to do more with peaceably dismantling the military and the armed FMLN guerrillas than confronting the real social and economic problems in the country.<sup>97</sup> The accords, among various other judicial, police, and political reforms, essentially halved the Salvadoran Army, abolished the three security forces under military control, created the PNC to be run outside the Ministry of Defense, disbanded the FMLN guerrillas and inaugurated the FMLN as a political party, and established an Ad Hoc Commission to investigate human rights violations during the war.<sup>98</sup> Call summarizes this remarkable process:

For the first time in history, a Latin American military submitted its officer corps to external review and vetting. Its worst human rights violators were purged, its budget reduced, and new levels of accountability and civilian input reached. As of 2002, the army was roughly the same size as the PNC, and its missions and doctrine reflected significant emphasis on classic external defense functions and respect for human rights and civilian control.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Arnson, "Introduction," 18.

<sup>97</sup> Antonio Cañas and Héctor Dada, "Political Transition and Institutionalization in El Salvador," in *Comparative Peace Processes in Latin America*, ed. Cynthia Arnson (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 71.

<sup>98</sup> Call, "Democratisation," 833.

<sup>99</sup> Call, "Democratisation," 836.

The UN mediated the negotiations—the first time an international organization played such a role in the conclusion of an intrastate conflict.<sup>100</sup> Additionally, the UN established a peacekeeping mission (ONUSAL) that provided several emergency mediators to El Salvador during their post-conflict reconstruction period. The UN also ensured that the international community properly funded all post-conflict initiatives in both El Salvador and Guatemala.<sup>101</sup>

There are many scholars who argue that the peace accords did not go far enough by allowing the military continued autonomy in policy and training, access to government and police positions, and legal impunity for many officers for human rights violations during the war.<sup>102</sup> For instance, Arana argues that “El Salvador’s cautious peace accords managed to avoid provoking most factions in the country’s army, but only by ignoring many of the important social and economic problems that led to the fighting in the first place.”<sup>103</sup> Yet without mediation, it is also just as likely that the country could have relapsed into patterns of state repression and civil war. One thing is certain, however: El Salvador’s reformed and reinvented judicial and police institutions and fledgling political parties would not be prepared for the epic crime wave that was to besiege the country from the late 1990s to the present. This, in Call’s words, “helps explain why international observers consider El Salvador’s reforms a success story, but many Salvadorans do not.”<sup>104</sup>

The gap between the expectations and the reality of the accords had largely to do with the negotiations and compromises themselves. The international community took action to attempt to change El Salvador for the better, yet pacts between FMLN and the military helped preserve the autonomy of the military while opening the state to the

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<sup>100</sup> Arnson, “Introduction,” 3.

<sup>101</sup> Whitfield, “Role of the United Nations,” 280.

<sup>102</sup> Ana Arana, “The New Battle for Central America,” *Foreign Affairs* 80, no. 6 (2001): 92–3; Also see Arnson, “Introduction,” 3–4; Bird and Williams, “El Salvador: Revolt and Negotiated Transition,” 40; Call, “Democratisation, War and State-Building,” 836; Cañas and Dada, “Political Transition,” 83; Doyle and Sambanis, *Making War and Building Peace*, 208–9; Stanley, *Protection Racket State*, 261–2; and Vickers, “Renegotiating Internal Security,” 401–2.

<sup>103</sup> Arana, “New Battle for Central America,” 93.

<sup>104</sup> Call, “Democratisation,” 827.



former guerrillas. In keeping with their predilection to generate pacts in order to maintain autonomy, the military again engaged in negotiations with the FMLN. Arnson summarizes the ensuing debate:

Throughout the course of the negotiations, the parties struggled with the issue of the reform of the armed forces. For the FMLN, the restructuring and purging, if not dissolution, of the armed forces was seen as paramount to resolve one of the underlying structural factors that had given rise to the war and, as a more practical matter, to permit the guerrillas to demobilize without simply being massacred. By the end of the talks, the government and guerrillas had agreed to reduce the size of the military and create an Ad Hoc Commission to purge it of corrupt and abusive members, dissolve the National Guard and the Treasury Police, create a new National Civilian Police open to the FMLN as well as to members of the existing National Police, dissolve all rapid-reaction army counterinsurgency battalions implicated in some of the worst human rights abuses of the war, and establish a truth commission whose mandate did not preclude the naming of names of those responsible for abuses.<sup>105</sup>

In addition to the concessions above, the military also maintained some remnants of their intelligence apparatus under different names.<sup>106</sup> The FMLN, in turn, gained access to the newly created PNC and was given political space in the form of the FMLN party. Wood argues that in the accords “the Left agreed to a democratic political regime and a capitalist economy with only limited socioeconomic reform, and the Right agreed to the Left’s participation in a democratic political regime along with some socioeconomic reform.”<sup>107</sup> And so many involved in the atrocities of war—FAES and FMLN alike—were folded into the new internal security apparatus, while even more were disbanded, returned to society with the scars of the war and their firearms.

Likely, the largest failing of the ONUSAL mission and the peace accords was the failure to properly demobilize and reintegrate civil war combatants in the post-war drawdown and the proper collection and disposal of firearms. Many promises were made to former guerrillas and Salvadoran soldiers of land grants and economic assistance

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<sup>105</sup> Arnson, “Introduction,” 19.

<sup>106</sup> Walter and Williams, “Military and Democratization in El Salvador,” 65.

<sup>107</sup> Wood, *Forging Democracy from Below*, 85.

meant to reintegrate combatants into society. Yet these promises fell short, and many former combatants ended up indebted, untrained, and unassisted.<sup>108</sup> After the war, large caches of military weapons remained in the civilian sector.<sup>109</sup> The Salvadoran government estimates that 360,000 military weapons were not turned over during demobilization after the peace accords in 1992.<sup>110</sup> Doyle and Sambanis sum up the effort thusly: “ONUSAL provided the right treatment for the right problem: monitoring and facilitation, along with technical assistance for institution-building.”<sup>111</sup>

The global economic environment began to exert additional stresses on El Salvador with the opening and liberalization of markets in the 1990s, in addition to the collateral effects of NAFTA in Central America. Larger numbers of urban poor—unable to make livings on their own—crowded the slums around San Salvador and other cities. While neoliberal developments grew the Salvadoran economy in terms of low interest rates, low inflation, and more access to capital, the country was more than ever vulnerable to shocks, most notably the fallout from the global recession of 2008.<sup>112</sup> According to World Bank statistics, the Salvadoran poverty level has hovered around 40 percent since the recession, 34.5 percent in 2012.<sup>113</sup> In 2013, over 60 percent of the Salvadoran GDP was composed of services, whereas agriculture made up just over 10 percent.<sup>114</sup>

The latest chapter in Salvadoran military history highlights the question of how far has El Salvador really demobilized its fighting forces. After the reforms of the peace accords, funding for the FAES dropped incredibly (see Table 1). The weakened security state and the fledgling PNC were unable to grapple with the murderously high crime rates

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<sup>108</sup> Michael W. Doyle and Nicholas Sambanis, *Making War and Building Peace: United Nations Peace Operations* (Princeton: University Press, 2006), 208.

<sup>109</sup> Doyle and Sambanis, *Making War and Building Peace*, 206.

<sup>110</sup> Data from *Weapons Collection in Central America: El Salvador and Guatemala* (SAND Program on Security and Development, 2000), found in “Transnational Organized Crime,” 60.

<sup>111</sup> Doyle and Sambanis, *Making War and Building Peace*, 209.

<sup>112</sup> Seelke, *El Salvador*, 7.

<sup>113</sup> “World Bank Development Indicators,” The World Bank, accessed 4 December 2014, <http://data.worldbank.org/country/el-salvador>.

<sup>114</sup> Seelke, *El Salvador*, 2.

of the late 1990s.<sup>115</sup> As a result, some aspects of El Salvador's security apparatus altered for the worst: a vigilante group of off-duty military and police known as *El Clan de Planta* (Black Shadow) took form to assassinate and intimidate perceived criminals. Another manifestation of the state's impotence is the endemic corruption within the PNC. Ávalos claims that the PNC "has been plagued by its own 'original sin': the inclusion of former soldiers that worked with criminal groups and preserved a closed power structure that prevented any authority from investigating them."<sup>116</sup> Also during this period of democratization, El Salvador saw a sharp rise in the number of private security agents, otherwise hired guns: 6,000 in 1996 to 18,943 in 2001.<sup>117</sup> By April 2013, there existed 460 private security companies, 28,639 employees with 20,234 firearms registered.<sup>118</sup> Bilateral arrangements with the UN or the United States have tried to address the deficiencies of the PNC, but they have had little effect.<sup>119</sup>

Table 1. FAES budget as percent GDP through the peace accords, 1988–1996<sup>120</sup>

Year	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
Percent GDP	4.5	4.6	3.7	3.3	2.1	1.5	1.2	1.1	1.0

The period of democratization put the FAES through a difficult transition. The military fought ardently to maintain some level of control during the negotiations. The process of civilianization would take time, and actors in the military would learn it was to their benefit to follow ONUSAL mandated changes. As Cañas and Dada state, "time must pass before the old institution stops producing antibodies to this new organ."<sup>121</sup> Yet

<sup>115</sup> Vickers, "Renegotiating Internal Security," 391.

<sup>116</sup> Héctor Silva Ávalos, "Corruption in El Salvador," Working paper for *Center for Latin American and Latino Studies*, March 2014, <http://ssrn.com/abstract=2419174>, 2.

<sup>117</sup> Call, "Democratisation," 842–3.

<sup>118</sup> "Public Security Index: Central America," *Red de Seguridad y Defensa de América Latina* (Buenos Aires: RESDAL, 2013), 65.

<sup>119</sup> Doyle and Sambanis, *Making War and Building Peace*, 209.

<sup>120</sup> Data from *World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers 1998* (Library of Congress No. 78–645925), U.S. Department of State Bureau of Verification and Compliance (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2000), 81.

<sup>121</sup> Cañas and Dada, "Political Transition," 82.

other actors in the state were all-too-interested in resurrecting the military into a functional political weapon in their fight against crime.

## 2. Crime and Punishment

The crime wave that plagued post-conflict El Salvador came largely from external circumstances, but later assumed a uniquely violent character owing to the Salvadoran response.<sup>122</sup> First, in an effort to crackdown on gang membership in Los Angeles and other dangerous U.S. gang-cities, the United States deported thousands of Salvadoran migrants with criminal histories and suspected gang affiliations.<sup>123</sup> The importation into El Salvador of gangsters with criminal training and transnational networks quickly led to the institutionalization of the two main gangs, *Mara Salvatrucha* and *Calle 18*, in addition to countless other *pandillas*. Bruneau states that these early deportations “unquestionably influenced the dynamic and style of the *Mara Salvatrucha* and the *18th Street Gang* as they emerged in the region, but those and subsequent deportations are not the reason gangs have taken such a hold on these societies.”<sup>124</sup>

Tables 2 and 3 capture the scope of the deportations to Northern Triangle countries from both the United States and Mexico.

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<sup>122</sup> José Miguel Cruz, “Government Responses and the Dark Side of Gang Suppression in Central America,” in *Maras: Gang Violence and Security in Central America*, ed. Thomas C. Bruneau, Lucía Dammert, and Elizabeth Skinner, 1st ed. (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2011), 139.

<sup>123</sup> Florina Cristiana Matei, “The Impact of U.S. Anti-gang Policies in Central America: Quo Vadis?” in *Maras: Gang Violence and Security in Central America*, ed. Thomas C. Bruneau, Lucía Dammert, and Elizabeth Skinner, 1st ed. (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2011), 198.

<sup>124</sup> Thomas C. Bruneau, “Introduction,” in *Maras: Gang Violence and Security in Central America*, ed. Thomas C. Bruneau, Lucía Dammert, and Elizabeth Skinner, 1st ed. (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2011), 14.

Table 2. Northern triangle deportations via air from the USA, 2007–2012<sup>125</sup>

Deportations via air from the USA	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Guatemalans	23,062	28,051	27,222	29,095	30,885	40,647
Hondurans	29,348	30,018	25,101	22,878	22,415	32,240
Salvadorans	20,111	20,203	19,209	18,734	16,759	19,685
<b>Total</b>	<b>72,521</b>	<b>78,272</b>	<b>71,532</b>	<b>70,707</b>	<b>70,059</b>	<b>95,572</b>

Table 3. Northern triangle deportations via land from Mexico, 2007–2011<sup>126</sup>

Deportations via land from Mexico	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Guatemalans	49,745	35,546	28,786	28,090	31,427
Hondurans	31,193	27,866	23,063	23,247	33,519
Salvadorans	16,678	12,999	10,534	10,643	8,944
<b>Total</b>	<b>97,346</b>	<b>77,411</b>	<b>62,383</b>	<b>61,980</b>	<b>73,890</b>

The repatriated members of *Mara Salvatrucha* and *Calle 18* have settled in and permeated Salvadoran society, and have acted like corrosive seawater on the state machinery. Moreover, the transnational nature of the criminal networks these gangs possess has made them a natural conductor of drug trafficking on its way from South America and the Caribbean into Mexico and the United States. The profits from this illicit activity have made these *maras*, in addition to the various other outlying *pandillas*, forces to be reckoned with by the state. As the violence concentrated around the drug trade intensifies, so did the general level of violence.<sup>127</sup> Gangs have diversified their portfolio of activity to include extortion, kidnapping, murder, arms trafficking, human trafficking, and other criminal endeavors. Sullivan argues that *maras* have morphed from traditional street gangs that battle for turf into “a new third generation that combines

<sup>125</sup> Derived from multiple sources, found in “Public Security Index,” 15.

<sup>126</sup> “Public Security Index,” 15.

<sup>127</sup> “Global Study on Homicide 2013,” UNODC, Vienna: United Nations Publishing, 2014, 46.

political and mercenary aims... [possessing] many of the organizational and operational attributes found with net-based triads, cartels and terrorist entities.”<sup>128</sup>

In this vein, the ARENA Party presidents Francisco Guillermo Flores Pérez (who is incidentally currently evading Salvadoran extradition in Panama for corruption charges as of October 2014) and Antonio Saca heavily politicized the campaign against crime. As an effort to shift public attention away from socio-economic elements that ARENA could do little to affect, the party preyed on the public apprehension of domestic insecurity.<sup>129</sup> Torres-Rivas argues that El Salvador entered a “new era of contradictions... Nothing is the same in the political ARENA, but the socio-economic conditions that provoked the military conflict still exist, only in a democratic setting.”<sup>130</sup> Political conservatives made electoral promises with little thought as to how the FAES would rise to the challenge.

In brief, *mano dura* policies, in Holland’s words, are the “introduction of discretionary crimes, diluted due process guarantees, and military participation in policing... formal measures that open the door to informal police abuse.”<sup>131</sup> From an institutional perspective, these policies were developed by the conservative right of the ARENA Party to form a much broader political base.<sup>132</sup> However, these policies resulted in no reduction in domestic insecurity—quite the opposite.<sup>133</sup> Holland presents the two phases of *mano dura* in El Salvador. The first phase began with an emergency law passed in 1996 to expedite the judicial process against suspected criminals, to raise minimum sentences for non-violent and minor crimes, to authorize the army to accompany the PNC on patrols, to allow juvenile delinquents to serve with adults, and to make criminal “illicit

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<sup>128</sup> John P. Sullivan, “Maras Morphing: Revisiting Third Generation Gangs,” *Global Crime* 7, no. 3 (2006): 489.

<sup>129</sup> Alisha C. Holland, “Right on Crime?: Conservative Party Politics and Mano Dura Policies in El Salvador,” *Latin America Research Review* 48, no. 1 (2013): 51.

<sup>130</sup> Torres-Rivas, “Foundations,” 108.

<sup>131</sup> Holland, “Right on Crime?” 46.

<sup>132</sup> Cruz, “Government Responses,” 146.

<sup>133</sup> Cruz, “Government Responses,” 151.

association.”<sup>134</sup> These reforms were repealed several months later, but a precedent was set. Just before President Flores left office, another emergency decree, *Plan Mano Dura*, passed in 2003 that re-enacted several of the previous measures. Gang membership was now illegal, the military and police conducted joint sweeps, and the state’s power to arrest and detain suspects strengthened.<sup>135</sup> Flores’ successor, President Saca, pushed his security forces to intensify their crackdown in *Plan Super Mano Dura*. These policies radicalized the El Salvador’s security state and criminal activity.<sup>136</sup> Domestic insecurity and the government crackdown fed a vicious circle. El Salvador waged war against the gangs, petty crime, and drugs; instead of sending death squads, politicians enacted *mano dura* policies that further exacerbated citizen insecurity. Cruz summarizes the dilemma faced by El Salvador well: “anti-gang crackdowns were conducted by institutions riddled with corruption, which not only exacerbated the illegitimate use of force but also contributed to the establishment of underground criminal networks originating from the very top of the institutions.”<sup>137</sup>

When the ARENA Party, having failed to reduce citizen insecurity with *mano dura* policies, could no longer paint the FMLN as irresponsible dreamers, and when the FMLN ran a middle-of-the-road candidate for president (Mauricio Funes, a popular newscaster and member of the FMLN political party, but not a former guerrilla), the FMLN finally triumphed at the polls. Civil-military relations and militarization under the Funes Administration is the point of departure for further analysis.

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<sup>134</sup> Holland, “Right on Crime?” 48–9.

<sup>135</sup> Holland, “Right on Crime?” 48–9.

<sup>136</sup> Cruz, “Government Responses,” 153.

<sup>137</sup> Cruz, “Government Responses,” 154.

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### III. CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS ASSESSMENT

Before assessing the current state of civil-military relations in El Salvador, it is important to note that the field is considerably difficult to qualify, let alone quantify. Data on force strength or defense budgets conveys part of the picture, but leaves much to be desired. This evaluation relies heavily on military force strength and economic data from various sources, and the results of scholarly review and reports in El Salvador. I draw on other sources such as media reports to illustrate my findings, but regrettably, the results are thus limited.

#### A. EFFECTIVENESS

Salvadoran military effectiveness is measured by ascertaining whether the FAES accomplish the roles and missions assigned to them.<sup>138</sup> The first piece to understanding effectiveness in the Salvadoran context is identifying the roles and missions. Article 212 of the 1983 Constitution charges the FAES with “ensuring the defense of the sovereignty of the state and territorial integrity, maintaining peace, tranquility and public security, and the execution of the constitution and other active laws.”<sup>139</sup> Legally committing the FAES to both internal and external security roles is unique to the region and Latin America at large.<sup>140</sup> For the purposes of this argument, whether the military is thus institutionally over-committed is irrelevant; the Salvadoran military is evaluated based on its roles defined in the Salvadoran Constitution. Returning to the role of the military, it is two-fold: internal and external security. In the geopolitical sense, the external mission of the Salvadoran military is the defense of Salvadoran sovereignty from the aggression of neighbor states. Considering the defense structures of other Central American countries, and the recent surge in border defense and urban security spending throughout the region,

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<sup>138</sup> Thomas C. Bruneau, “Introduction,” in *Who Guards the Guardians and How: Democratic Civil-Military Relations*, 1st ed., ed. Thomas C. Bruneau and Scott D. Tollefson (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006), 7.

<sup>139</sup> “Report on the Security Sector, 36–8.

<sup>140</sup> “Report on the Security Sector,” 39.

El Salvador is on par with its immediate neighbors.<sup>141</sup> Table 4 summarizes 2012 defense spending and force size in Central America. What is more, the perception of threat in the region is low—that is to say, the regional powers have focused their combat force towards other contemporary threats rather than geopolitical intrigue. For instance, the Soccer War of 1969 with Honduras has been the only external armed conflict that El Salvador has participated in since 1907. Yet El Salvador has fought two major civil wars, one in 1932 and another in the 1980s.<sup>142</sup> El Salvador has followed the traditional Latin American pattern of relying on external legal organizations like the Organization of American States and the World Court to marginalize the legitimacy of interstate armed conflict.<sup>143</sup>

Table 4. Defense spending and relative force size in Central America, 2012<sup>144</sup>

	Defense Spending (U.S. \$ m)	Defense Spending (% GDP)	Troop Levels (000s)		
			Armed Forces	Reserves	Paramilitaries
<b>Guatemala</b>	212	.42	17	64	25
<b>Belize</b>	16	1.04	1	1	0
<b>Honduras</b>	151	.83	12	60	8
<b>El Salvador</b>	145	.61	15	10	17
<b>Costa Rica</b>	349	.78	0	0	10
<b>Nicaragua</b>	66	.84	12	0	0
<b>Panama</b>	551	1.58	0	0	12

While many of these contemporary threats to Salvadoran sovereignty come from transnational entities, such as transnational gangs and drug trafficking flows, these threats are manifested as internal threats without borders. The Salvadoran military has not been able to stem the tide of these external threats.

<sup>141</sup> The sharpest rise in defense spending in Latin America came from Mexico and Central America—by 6.9% in 2013; in *The Military Balance: The Annual Assessment of Global Military Capabilities and Defence Economics*, International Institute for Strategic Studies (Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2014), 359.

<sup>142</sup> Centeno, *Blood and Debt*, 44–6.

<sup>143</sup> David R. Mares, *Violent Peace: Militarized Interstate Bargaining in Latin America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 48.

<sup>144</sup> *Military Balance*, 490.

Another dimension of El Salvador's external role is the international status of the FAES. To the credit of the Salvadoran military, they have maintained an international presence in multinational coalition forces and UN peacekeeping missions. Since 1995, El Salvador has had military observers in Western Sahara. In 2003, El Salvador was the only Latin American nation to support the United States in a coalition of the willing for Operation Iraqi Freedom—a force that stayed in Iraq until the end of the conflict. Since 2012, a Salvadoran infantry battalion has served in Afghanistan. El Salvador currently has military observers or peacekeepers in the Western Sahara, Afghanistan, Cote D'Ivoire, Liberia, South Sudan, Lebanon, and Haiti.<sup>145</sup> Perla and Cruz-Feliciano argue that these actions are part of El Salvador's larger strategy of conciliation toward the United States.<sup>146</sup> By maintaining an international presence, the Salvadoran military, aside from advancing in the areas of professionalism and reputation, has earned the respect of important allies in the United Nations—most notably the United States. I argue that by participating in multinational missions, even when the country suffers through a good deal of domestic adversity, El Salvador has secured a degree of legitimacy and mutual support in their external mission. Considering the FAES's ability to defend their territorial integrity and unique willingness to participate in multinational missions, I consider the external role of the Salvadoran military effective.

El Salvador's effectiveness in the face of their internal mission is a different story entirely. As already mentioned, transnational threats that permeate borders manifest as internal threats. In the reforms to the constitution after the peace accord, only certain articles were altered to give the responsibility of public security to the PNC; the change called for Salvadoran military action in cases of emergency.<sup>147</sup> Yet during the reorganizing years, the government already took false steps by delaying the curtailment of military forces in some cases, and in others, merely re-labeled military units to

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<sup>145</sup> Data from *Military Balance*, 1979–2014.

<sup>146</sup> Héctor Perla, Jr. and Héctor Cruz-Feliciano, "The Twenty-first-Century Left in El Salvador and Nicaragua: Understanding Apparent Contradictions and Criticisms," *Latin American Perspectives* 40 (March 2013): 85.

<sup>147</sup> "Report on the Security Sector," 51–2.

continue operating in the civilian context.<sup>148</sup> As early as 1993—early relative to the peace accords—President Cristiani ordered the military to patrol highways and join the fledgling PNC on routine patrols.<sup>149</sup> During the *mano dura* regimes, these military patrols went from emergent to routine. Under extreme pressure to act in the face of outrageous crime levels, President Funes passed a decree in 2009 that extended the policing mission of the FAES—incidentally a decree that was recently upheld by El Salvador’s high court in April 2014.<sup>150</sup> In 2009 he assigned some 2,000 additional soldiers to assist the PNC: 1,000 more in 2010, a bump to 3,500 in 2011, and by mid-2013, 6,300 troops—half the army.<sup>151</sup> Has the increase in troop levels generated a higher level of citizen security in El Salvador?

Unfortunately, the presence of the military in these urban situations has not reduced crime. It is a non-sequitur to say that the presence of the Salvadoran military on these patrols has actually escalated the level of criminal violence in El Salvador, but their presence has not mitigated the problem. Looking at a specific example, the Salvadoran legislature passed a decree in 2010 that ordered the FAES to deploy to Salvadoran prisons in an effort to sanitize what was perceived to be a quickly deteriorating situation.<sup>152</sup> While the military presence may have looked good on the front page *La Prensa Gráfica*, their presence did nothing to bring down cases of extortion and criminal cell phone usage inside the prisons; in fact, the presence of the armed forces tightened prison access and obscured any level of transparency. Further, having the military in charge of the grossly inadequate prison system puts the FAES in a position where

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<sup>148</sup> Vickers, “Renegotiating Internal Security,” 401–2.

<sup>149</sup> Call, “Democratisation,” 836.

<sup>150</sup> Seelke, *El Salvador*, 11.

<sup>151</sup> Jim Dorschner, “Beyond ‘Mano Dura’: Securing Central America’s Borderlands,” *Jane’s Defence Weekly* (May 21, 2014): 5.

<sup>152</sup> From reports from *La Prensa Gráfica*: Efrén Lemus, “FAES anuncia registro de personal penitenciario,” 1 June 2010, <http://www.laprensagrafica.com/el-salvador/judicial/121871-faes-anuncia-registro-de-personal-penitenciario>; Rafael Macal, “El Salvador: FAES toma control de penales de Izalco y Gotera,” 25 June 2010, <http://www.laprensagrafica.com/el-salvador/departamentos/127991-el-salvador-faes-toma-control-de-penal-de-izalco>; Juan Carlos Barahona and Amadeo Cabrea, “Fuerza Armada toma control de penitenciería de Apanteos,” 29 December 2010, <http://www.laprensagrafica.com/el-salvador/judicial/161531-fuerza-armada-toma-control-de-penitencieria-de-apanteos>.

mistakes can happen. For instance, the Amnesty International Ombudsman for human rights in El Salvador received several reports in 2011 that military personnel had conducted illegal vaginal and anal searches of female Salvadorans visiting the prisons.<sup>153</sup> Again, leveling charges of malicious involvement on the part of the military is obtuse and inappropriate; however, it is clear that this particular internal mission was a failure. I assess the internal role of the FAES to be ineffective.

Considering the two-part role assigned to the Salvadoran military by the constitution, both internal and external, I argue that the failure of the internal role is the larger problem. While the internal mission is nearly impossible considering the limited resources of a legitimizing state, I nevertheless assess that the Salvadoran military has not yet achieved the degree of effectiveness necessary for a healthy trinity of civil-military relations.

## **B. EFFICIENCY**

Efficiency is measured by how accountable the armed forces are to their civilian overseers in terms of their use of resources.<sup>154</sup> Efficiency is often a more difficult metric to attain than effectiveness in that it requires careful management. As Matei argues, “launching numerous expensive missiles at a single target and destroying it ‘multiple times’ is clearly effective but not an efficient use of resources.”<sup>155</sup> In this assessment, resources are El Salvador’s efficient use of its service members is largely subjective. The most comprehensive assessment involves reviewing the numbers of combat deaths with reference to the whole, a review of the professional development of members of the armed forces against those in the private sector, and an evaluation of how military personnel are utilized at their varying fields within the service. It suffices to say, this evaluation is nearly impossible.

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<sup>153</sup> “Amnesty International Report 2012: The State of the World’s Human Rights,” (London: Amnesty International Ltd, 2012), 139.

<sup>154</sup> Bruneau and Goetze Jr., “Ministries of Defense,” 76.

<sup>155</sup> Matei, “New Conceptualization,” 35.

The FAES, however, has experienced a resurgence of trust both domestically and internationally. With the elevated crime levels and the apparent impotency of the PNC to manage the problem, popular support for the FAES internal security mission jumped over 20 percentage points from 2008 to 2009 when President Funes announced the FAES's new role with street patrols.<sup>156</sup> The involvement of the FAES abroad since 1995 at least suggests a not entirely insular mission. Both *Military Balance* and *Jane's* suggested that Salvadoran units that served in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Lebanon were well-regarded and have kept El Salvador "at the fore of modern warfare."<sup>157</sup> In terms of their internal role, the Salvadoran military has a good deal of experience with counterinsurgency (COIN) operations from the recent struggle against the FMLN. COIN is relevant in the current fight against domestic insecurity vis-à-vis clandestine drug activities in both urban and rural settings. The *tanda* of commanding officers now were the junior officers on the front lines during the civil war, which suggests an institutionalization of COIN tactics.

As another measure of efficiency within the military, the level of corruption is also considered. The term corruption has certainly proliferated in more recent literature on Central America, and as such, has been used liberally to describe both causal factors and results of public insecurity in the region. Perhaps there has been an insufficient study of corruption within the FAES, but I have found nothing concerning the matter outside a few individual reports or unsubstantiated observations.<sup>158</sup> At the same time, there is a great deal of consensus on the high levels of corruption in the PNC and other rungs of government.<sup>159</sup>

In terms of the military budget, the Salvadoran military's optimal and most efficient use of the money entrusted to it is perhaps easier to evaluate. The Salvadoran military budget was heavily slashed as the ink dried on the Chapultepec Peace Accords, yet perhaps more detrimental to the military budget was Salvadoran stalled economic

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<sup>156</sup> Data provided by IUDOP, found in "Situación de la Seguridad," 95; also, see Figure 10.

<sup>157</sup> Quote from "El Salvador," *Jane's World Armies*, April 7, 2014, 2; *Military Balance* 2013, 454.

<sup>158</sup> *Jane's* alleges it has been unable to verify a claim that the Mexican gang *Los Zetas* has recruited members of Salvadoran special forces in Dorschner, "Beyond 'Mano Dura,'" 7.

<sup>159</sup> "Public Security Index," 58.

growth in the early 2000s and the 2008 global economic crisis.<sup>160</sup> Yet even as resources dwindle, the Salvadoran military has shown a resiliency in making effective use of the equipment given to them. El Salvador's Joint Chief of Staff General Acosta stated that the military would "operate with what we have."<sup>161</sup> The Salvadoran Army is described in *Jane's Defence Weekly* thusly:

The army has a core force of 18 understrength infantry battalions assigned to six brigade-level military zones across the country. These are generally equipped with 1980s civil war-era weapons, radios and vehicles. The joint Army Special Forces Command, created in 2006 with headquarters outside the capitol of San Salvador, controls five company-strength special forces (SF) units and the Parachute Battalion. With better equipment and training, including interaction with U.S. and other foreign forces, these are the most capable elements of the armed forces.<sup>162</sup>

The article goes on to say that the Salvadoran Navy makes do with patrol craft to interdict go-fast boats that typically refuel alongside larger ships in drug runs through Salvadoran waters. Lastly, the Salvadoran Air Force relies on civil war era Huey helicopters and used Cessna A-37B Dragonflies (replacements recently acquired from Chile in 2013) for close-air COIN support.<sup>163</sup>

On balance, considering the tightly constrained nature of the Salvadoran military budget, determined year-to-year in the Ministry of Defense and the legislature, and also considering the highly professional and resilient nature of the military's force composition, I assess the FAES to meet the metric of efficiency. The Salvadoran military budget jumped by roughly 37 percent while its force composition remained constant under the Funes Administration.<sup>164</sup> In addition to increasing spending on his social programs, Funes raised taxes on the wealthy—wildly unpopular toward the end of his administration—to boost FAES spending levels.<sup>165</sup> These figures suggest a preventative

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<sup>160</sup> This trend is established by evaluating per capita defense expenditure derived from *Military Balance*, 1979–2014.

<sup>161</sup> General Acosta quoted in *Military Balance* 2013, 416.

<sup>162</sup> Dorschner, "Beyond 'Mano Dura,'" 7.

<sup>163</sup> Dorschner, "Beyond 'Mano Dura,'" 7.

<sup>164</sup> Figure derived from defense budgets in *Military Balance*, 1979–2014.

<sup>165</sup> *Military Balance* 2012, 361.

approach to military corruption whereby service member salaries, benefits, and equipment see at least marginal improvement. Newly inaugurated President Sánchez Cerén pledged—along with a more socio-economic approach—that the FAES would continue to support the PNC in the fight against insecurity.<sup>166</sup> Whether Cerén’s administration will make headway in the fight against crime is for anybody to decide, but it appears that his use of the military will not diverge significantly with that of his predecessor.<sup>167</sup>

### C. DEMOCRATIC CIVILIAN CONTROL

Determining the extent of democratic civilian control as the third pillar of the CCMR’s civil-military trinity involves an assessment of the following four areas: 1) the MOD, 2) the legislature, 3) interagency capacity, and 4) an intelligence apparatus that supports both the MOD and the legislature.

#### 1. MOD

The MOD is here assessed using Pion-Berlin’s framework: 1) a mostly civilian ministry (with a civilian minister) that 2) organizes and equips the military; 3) derives tactics, operations, and strategies; 4) widens the organizational distance between the military brass and the civilians in charge; and 5) divides power amongst the various services within the armed forces.<sup>168</sup> With regard to the civilian influence within the military, the current minister of defense is General (then Colonel) David Munguía Payés, resurrected from forced retirement in 2009, by President Funes. Although he is the first non-active duty officer to head the ministry, he is still seen wearing his uniform in *La*

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<sup>166</sup> Fernando Romero, “Concertar para mejor economía y seguridad,” *La Prensa Gráfica*, June 2, 2014, page 2.

<sup>167</sup> “Inauguration of New President in El Salvador Unlikely to Bring Major Policy Shift, Army Deployed Against Gangs,” *Jane’s Intelligence Weekly*, June 2, 2014, 2.

<sup>168</sup> Cited earlier, Pion-Berlin, “Latin American Civil-Military Relations,” 74–5.



*Prensa Gráfica*.<sup>169</sup> As of 2006, the MOD had “no civilian presence.”<sup>170</sup> As of the latest FLACSO report (2013), “although El Salvador leads Central America in the level of technical competence within the ministry (possessing both a permanent advisory staff and military advisors), there is still no civilian technical experts.”<sup>171</sup> As the defense budget is released by the legislature on an annual basis, the MOD does not participate in any long-range strategic military planning. The onus of strategy is still with the Salvadoran Joint Chiefs of Staff.<sup>172</sup> Although El Salvador has made the largest democratic advances by publishing three defense white papers since 1998, the MOD still has a relatively low level of responsibilities: assisting in promotions and demotions whereas the military takes on responsibility for troop deployment, infrastructure, doctrine, training, and management of human resources.”<sup>173</sup> As such, the MOD fails to insulate the executive and other sources of state power from the military.

The MOD also fails to divide and conquer military power by engendering competition between the different services. Since 1979, the Salvadoran Army has made up an average 91 percent of FAES total manpower.<sup>174</sup> When considering the low tech nature of the military’s very few naval and air force platforms, and that the other services only conduct support operations for the army’s mission areas, I conclude that the army dominates the MOD, and more importantly, the military. Overall, the Salvadoran MOD may be one of the more progressively democratic ministries in Central America, however, it still does not exhibit strong characteristics of democratic civilian control.

## **2. Legislature**

The assessment of the legislature will be done using the conditions put forth by Agüero: 1) policy enactment without military interference; 2) definition of military

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<sup>169</sup> Payés background from Inigo Guevera, “New Defense Minister Takes Office in El Salvador,” *Jane’s Defence Weekly*, June 12, 2009 and “Los elegidos para iniciar quinquenio 2014–2019,” *La Prensa Grafica*, May 22, 2014.

<sup>170</sup> “Report on the Security Sector,” 28.

<sup>171</sup> “Report on the Security Sector,” 35.

<sup>172</sup> “Report on the Security Sector,” 24.

<sup>173</sup> Table 1.8 in “Report on the Security Sector,” 23.

<sup>174</sup> Derived from *Military Balance, 1979–2014*.

objectives and overall organization of defense; 3) formulation of defense policy; and 4) oversight of defense policy implementation.<sup>175</sup> The National Assembly, with support or prodding from the executive, has largely achieved control over military policy. The military is charged with internal and external defense by the constitution, but it is up to the legislature to authorize the incremental use of military force in the domestic ARENA. The degree to which the legislature serves as a rubber stamp to the executive is another argument, but in the case of El Salvador, the military under the Funes Administration was directed to assume a quickly growing role in domestic security; at present, again, half of the Salvadoran Army is deployed in the country in a security posture, much to the dismay of army top brass that have tried to restore their conventional role since the end of the civil war.<sup>176</sup> Additionally, the National Assembly controls constitutional prerogatives such as the power to declare peace or war, deploy troops, declare states of emergency, revise and approve budgets, approve presidential appointments, draft bills, and formally request information—directly from the MOD, if necessary.<sup>177</sup> There is nothing that restricts the legislature from formulating defense policy, but one must consider that the military budget is based on the prior year's expenditure. As noted earlier, the FAES maintains relative autonomy regarding long term strategy. However, the two have come to loggerheads over the issue of internal security, and it appears that the legislative mandate that the military fulfill internal security missions has prevailed. While the top brass still controls how the defense budget is spent, to include the responsibility of defense organization, the legislature has achieved civilian control over mission definition and policy formulation.

As far as defining mission success, the legislature is lacking. First the legislature has very little technical support regarding military issues.<sup>178</sup> Even if the legislature understood how to assess mission completion, however, there is little reason to believe they could agree on anything: as of July 2013, the Salvadoran National Assembly was

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<sup>175</sup> Cited earlier in Agüero, "Toward Civilian Supremacy in South America," 177–8.

<sup>176</sup> "El Salvador," 2–3.

<sup>177</sup> "Report on the Security Sector," 49.

<sup>178</sup> "Report on the Security Sector," 49.

highly fragmented: 39 percent ARENA, 37 percent FMLN, 13 percent GLAN, 7 percent PCN, and 3 percent other.<sup>179</sup> This will, of course, change over time—especially if President Cerén rises to the occasion—but my current assessment is that the definition of success remains illusory. As far as legislative oversight over defense activities, El Salvador—like Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico—have a defense specific commission within the National Assembly. That said, this committee possesses no permanent staff, which means knowledge is lost with high turnover.<sup>180</sup> As such, the National Assembly is only as effective at evaluating the armed forces as their best lineup in the assembly, which is, again, an unlikely situation. Further, under the Funes Administration, the legislature has been either unwilling or incapable of ceasing the president’s continual use of the FAES to support the public security role, a power the Salvadoran Constitution grants the National Assembly.<sup>181</sup> In summary, I assess that the legislature has achieved the upper hand of the military in three of four of Agüero’s criteria.

### **3. Interagency**

Interagency cooperation is assessed as a close link among the various entities that report to and receive orders from the state: that the executive has an appropriate forum in which to formulate defense policy and have access to fair and expert consultation of military affairs. El Salvador does possess a National Advisory Council, the *Consejo de Seguridad Nacional* (CSNP), created in 1992, that reports directly to the president.<sup>182</sup> The CSNP seemed to function well through the 2000s. Based on the Salvadoran response to threats received from terrorists in 2005, Bruneau and Matei assert that “El Salvador is an excellent case study of a country that perceived a threat, in this case from international terrorism, and concluded that it had to create an NSC to most effectively respond to the threat.”<sup>183</sup> However, as of 2006, this council is not supported by a ministerial strategic

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<sup>179</sup> Derived from “El Salvador Country Forecast,” *Economist Intelligence Unit*, July 2013, 6.

<sup>180</sup> “Report on the Security Sector,” 49.

<sup>181</sup> Constitution of the Republic of El Salvador, Article 168, 12<sup>th</sup> paragraph.

<sup>182</sup> Thomas C. Bruneau and Florina Cristiana Matei, “National Security Councils: Their Potential Functions in Democratic Civil-Military Relations,” *Defense and Security Analysis* 25, no. 3 (2009): 261.

<sup>183</sup> Bruneau and Matei, “National Security Councils,” 261.

planning unit within the MOD.<sup>184</sup> In other words, the president receives direct advice from and formulates defense policy with his active duty generals. The irregular national security practices of President Mauricio Funes are covered in greater detail in the case analyses in Chapter V.

#### **4. Intelligence Support**

Bruneau states that part of democratic civilian control is that the intelligence sector obeys and supports the functions of the legislature and the MOD. Many Central American countries possess highly effective intelligence units, holdovers from decades of locating and weeding out malcontents within their borders. In El Salvador, both death squads and the corrupt state police services utilized military intelligence.<sup>185</sup> The Chapultepec Peace Accords dismantled the military National Intelligence Directorate and created the Salvadoran State Intelligence Body (OIE) to be operated under civilian management and to report to the executive.<sup>186</sup> The OIE, for instance, does not answer to any ministry, including the MOD, but rather reports directly to the executive.<sup>187</sup> The OIE has the ability to synthesize intelligence and form reports or other materials, but the organization does not coordinate with any other state agency when advising the president.<sup>188</sup> In terms of legislative control, the OIE is answerable to the National Assembly per the law.<sup>189</sup> Yet, in practice the National Assembly has neither created regulations over intelligence activities nor acted to assert control over said activities.<sup>190</sup> In sum, the OIE may choose to support the MOD and the legislature, but nothing enforces this behavior.

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<sup>184</sup> Table 1.6 in “Report on the Security Sector,” 20.

<sup>185</sup> Call, “Democratisation,” 832.

<sup>186</sup> Call, “Democratisation,” 833.

<sup>187</sup> Table 3.5 in “Report on the Security Sector,” 111.

<sup>188</sup> Tables 3.3 and 3.4 in “Report on the Security Sector,” 107–8.

<sup>189</sup> Call, “Democratisation,” 833.

<sup>190</sup> Table 3.1 in “Report on the Security Sector,” 105.

## **5. Summary**

Table 5 summarizes my assessment of civil-military relations in El Salvador. In terms of effectiveness, while the FAES has an adequate force structure to protect its sovereignty, and has participated in several multinational coalitions, they have failed to improve public security within El Salvador. Whether this should be a mission area for the FAES is for another argument, but as they have been tasked with internal security, this assessment charges that they have not yet effectively fulfilled this duty. In terms of efficiency, expressed here as the efficient use of manpower and capital, the FAES has performed superbly. El Salvador has efficiently used limited resources during the military's downsizing; unfortunately, as expressed in the evaluation of effectiveness, the role assigned to the FAES is likely too large. Finally, democratic civilian control of the military is assessed of not having yet been achieved. While the Salvadoran legislature exercises control over defense policy, they lack the appropriate levels of oversight. Meanwhile, El Salvador's MOD fulfills none of the requirements of this analysis for democratic civilian control. In sum, based on the analysis of this chapter, civil-military control of El Salvador during the Funes Administration does not meet the requirements of the CCMR trinity.

Table 5. Trinity assessment of civil military relations in El Salvador<sup>191</sup>

	Yes	No
<b><u>Effectiveness</u></b>		
External	X	
Internal		X
Overall		X
<b><u>Efficiency</u></b>		
Manpower	X	
Budget	X	
Overall	X	
<b><u>democratic civilian control</u></b>		
MOD		
Civilianized		X
Manages defense objectives		X
Organizes and equips		X
Facilitates organizational distance to civilian power		X
Divides and dominates military services		X
Legislature		
Policy enactment without interference of military	X	
Defines objectives and organizes defense	X	
Formulates defense policy	X	
Oversight		X
Overall		X

<sup>191</sup> Author's own findings.

## IV. MILITARIZATION ASSESSMENT

Militarization in El Salvador is a persistent theme throughout its history. This chapter assesses the current deployment of FAES troops based on some quantitative and qualitative metrics, provides context with a survey of the period of analysis (2009–2014), and makes a few general observations based on the assessment.

### A. MEASURING MILITARIZATION

#### 1. Quantitative Metrics

As discussed earlier, in terms of quantitative data, part of the metric to capture militarization encompasses the size of the military force relative to the population. According to the Salvadoran Constitution, military service is compulsory for all able-bodied males age eighteen to thirty.<sup>192</sup> Bowman measures militarization as the “size of the military budget as a percent of GDP and the number of soldiers per thousand inhabitants.”<sup>193</sup>

Figures 1 and 2 illustrate Bowman’s metrics for militarization for the Northern Triangle countries of Central America (Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador). In terms of defense spending (Figure 1), both El Salvador and Guatemala held high sustained levels during the years of conflict, and then an abrupt drop-off afterwards. It may also be observed that while Guatemala and Honduras reached levels of defense spending less than one percent of GDP in the 2000s, El Salvador never dipped below this level. The same general trend may be observed for percent participation (Figure 2). The FAES saw a steep reduction in force levels from 1992 to 1994—from sixteen percent participation to roughly six percent—and then a gradual reduction to about four percent participation at the start of the Funes Administration. The data demonstrates that Funes boosted levels of percent participation back up to roughly five-and-a-half percent.

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<sup>192</sup> Article 215 of the El Salvador Constitution.

<sup>193</sup> Kirk S. Bowman, *Militarization, Democracy, and Development: The Perils of Praetorianism in Latin America* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University, 2002), 20.

All said, however, the data is overwhelming, and does little to explain the specific case of El Salvador. Certainly, most of Central America—and even Latin America—has gone through similar trends in terms of military dictatorships and domestic strife. Another deficiency of these metrics is that exact reported values are not known. These figures also do not account for the unknown numbers of territorial defense forces, mercenary paramilitaries, nor uncounted guerrillas. For analysis of militarization in El Salvador, I move beyond just quantitative metrics.

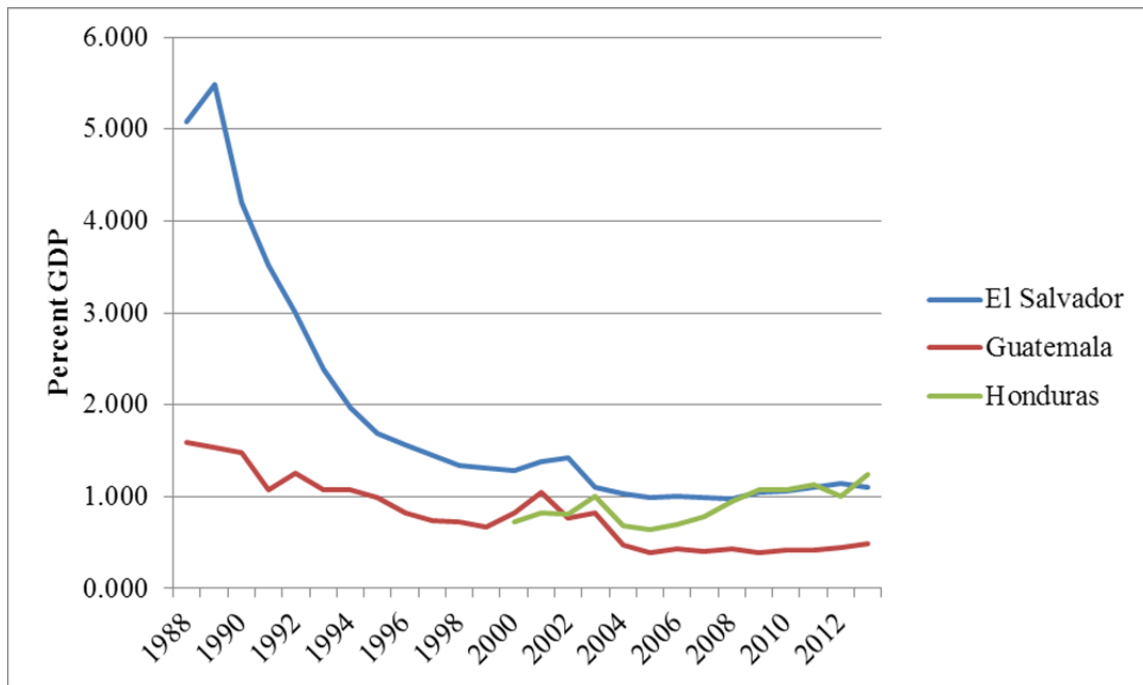


Figure 1. Northern Triangle of Central America defense spending as percent GDP, 1988–2013<sup>194</sup>

<sup>194</sup> Data compiled from two sources: *Military Balance, 1979–2013*; and “Military Expenditure (% of GDP),” The World Bank, accessed 5 December 2014, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/MS.MIL.XPND.GD.ZS>.



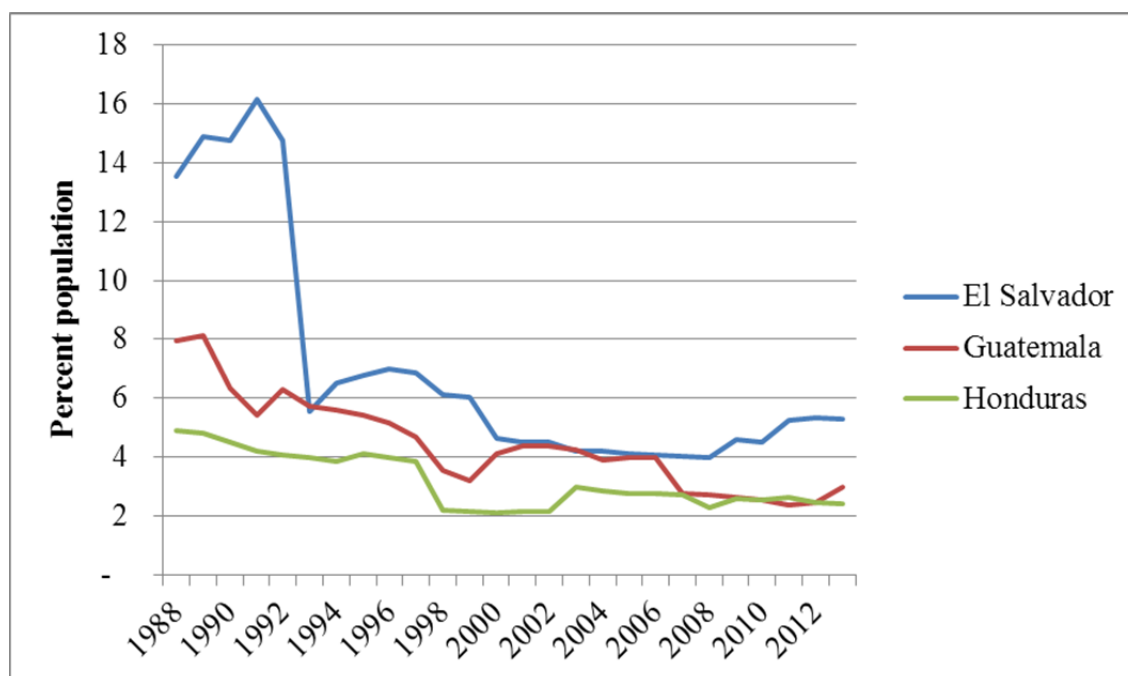


Figure 2. Northern Triangle of Central America population and percent military participation, 1988–2013<sup>195</sup>

## 2. Images of Militarization

On the other end of the spectrum from quantitative metrics, in terms of measuring militarization, is archival evidence and photography. This section explores Salvadoran troop deployments visually relative to its recent civil war history. The so-called *Libro Amarillo*, published by the Salvadoran intelligence apparatus during the civil war, features pages upon pages of black and white photographs not unlike an old high school year book. After every ten pages of photos are tables listing the full names of those photographed; their pseudonyms, if any; their organization; and their rank or activity, such as *político*, *combatiente*, *miembro*, or *ideólogo*. No information is listed as to their records or suspected activities, and many of the photographs are so obscured and whitewashed as to not be useful at all for the purposes of finding a suspected guerrilla. This was the Salvadoran state in 1987: through contacts in all departments and localities all throughout El Salvador, the state security apparatus was able to construct and distribute a comprehensive—strictly in terms of sheer volume—listing of 1,915 suspected

<sup>195</sup> Data compiled from *The Military Balance: 1979–2014*.

enemies of the state. On the list was President Salvador Sánchez Cerén; others were human rights defenders, labor leaders, and political leaders. Many on the list were illegally detained, some were tortured, others, extra-judicially executed, and still more disappeared. Written by hand on the archived copy released to the public 28 September 2014 is the note: “*Que lo usen, sacar fotocopias de las fotografías y ponerlo en boletín para que conozcan a sus enemigos.*” (“Use it, make copies of the photographs and put them on your bulletin board so you will know your enemies.”)<sup>196</sup> Quite an elaborate militarized network is required to generate such a hit-list. Owing largely to the ability of the Salvadoran military-security complex to delve deep down into the countryside—the ungoverned spaces, a place where many countries struggle to assert their presence—the military discerned friend from foe. Naturally, many of those on the list were guilty by association, victims of mistaken identity, or merely unfriendly to the wrong people in their respective departments.

For a look at the climate of militarization in El Salvador from 2009–2014, many of the photographs featured in *La Presna Gráfica*, El Salvador’s moderately conservative and independent national daily owned by the Dutriz Group, give prominence to the surge in crime in El Salvador.<sup>197</sup> Many of these photographs show PNC officers and staff cordoning off crime scenes and conducting preliminary investigations while wearing ski masks for their own protection. Others show PNC officers and Salvadoran soldiers, similarly protected with either ski masks or photo correction, carrying automatic rifles, as they conduct military-style patrols through San Salvador or searches in the outlying departments. These photos reflect a country at war with itself again, but this time against poverty and crime. In other words, El Salvador’s legacy of militarization has prepared

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<sup>196</sup> Transcription and translation provided on the George Washington Archive webpage; the photos described can be viewed by downloading the pdf at the following link; [http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB485/index\\_es.html](http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB485/index_es.html).

<sup>197</sup> Open Source Center qualifies *La Prensa Gráfica* as “website of independent, moderately conservative, largest-circulation daily founded by Jose Dutriz; critical of the FMLN”; found in “Central America Media Watch: SICA Analyzes Violence in Region,” *Open Source Center*, accessed 8 December 2014, [https://www.opensource.gov/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS\\_0\\_0\\_200\\_203\\_121123\\_43/content/Display/LAR2014120764985459#index=1&searchKey=17356483&rpp=10](https://www.opensource.gov/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS_0_0_200_203_121123_43/content/Display/LAR2014120764985459#index=1&searchKey=17356483&rpp=10).

contemporary Salvadorans for the level of violence they see today; instead of the state influencing conscript peasantry in the fields, the gangs attract the young urban poor.



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ALBUM GENERAL DE D/T PLATERCIEROS AL FIAN/FOR  
(LICHE AMARILLO)

REF.C. AAGE  
FECHA 06 JUL 1967

C

CODIGO	PERSONALIDADES		SEUDONIMO	ORGANIZACION	CARGO O ACTIVIDAD	CONSERVACIONES
C181	CLIMACO Rivera	, José Catarino	JUANCITO	FPL	Miliciano	Amnistiada
C182	CLIMACO Rivas	, José Santos		FPL	Miliciano	
C183	CRUZ Cabrera	, Raúl		PCS	Miembro	
C184	CRUZ Cruz	, Marcelo		FMLN	Instructor Mil.	
C185	CRUZ Guevara	, Mario René		ERE/PAPU	Miliciano	
C186	CRUZ Hernández	, María Genoveva		FMLN	Miliciano	
C187	CRUZ Portillo	, José Isidro	CMDTE. SOFIA	FMLN	Miliciano	Amnistiado
C188	CRUZ Canales	, Elia		FPL	Brigadista	
C189	(N/F) CRUZ Rivas	, Elia		FARN	Colaboradora	
C190	CABALLERO de Figueroa	, Rosa Margarita	CARLAY	ERP	Miliciano	
C191	CABEZA Avila	, Wilfredo		ERP	Miliciano	
C192	CACERES Baires	, Rigoberto Antonio		FPL	Combatiente	
C193	CALDERON Benavidez	, Jaime Salvador		FPL	Político	
C194	CALDERON Chávez	, Carlos Alberto		FPL	Combatiente	
C195	campos Martínez	, José Américo		PCS	Miembro	
C196	CAMPES Reyes	, Francisco	LEYDI	FPL	Miliciano	
C197	CANALES Rivera	, Consuelo de los Milagros		ERP	Miliciano	
C198	CANALES Sibrián	, Anastasio		ERP	Miliciano	
C199	CAÑAS Climaco	, Jesús Antonio		DAVID	Combatiente	
C200	CARBALLO Castro	, Eliseo de Jesús		AQUILINO	Combatiente	
C201	CARDOZA Mejía	, José Adán		ROBERTO	Combatiente K-93	

Figure 3. Photos and descriptions from *Libro Amarillo*<sup>198</sup>

<sup>198</sup> Sample page and corresponding listings found in *Libro Amarillo*, 69 and 88.  
[http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB485/index\\_es.html](http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB485/index_es.html)



Figure 4. Sampling of PNC and FAES images from *La Prensa Gráfica*, 2012–2014<sup>199</sup>

<sup>199</sup> Images taken from *La Prensa Gráfica* online, from left to right, top to bottom: Ricardo Flores and Jessel Santos, “FAES buscará padilleros en 10 municipios,” 14 December 2012; Gloria Flores and Jessel Santos, “Fin de semana se registraron 25 asesinatos en El Salvador,” 10 November 2014; Loida Martínez Avelar, “Sacerdote critica más militares en las calles,” 17 March 2014; Jessel Santos, M. Bolaños, H. Rivas, and M. Salguero, “Aumentan homicidios multiples en el país,” 15 April 2014; and Jessel Santos, “Pandillas buscan infiltrar FAES y PNC: Perdomo,” 6 May 2014.

The following historical survey provides context to the current state of militarization in El Salvador from 2009–2014. Why did President Funes promise more FAES troops on the streets and why did this initially meet with mass public approval? How has the high levels of militarization in the past, as seen in the *Libro Amarillo*, for example, affected the younger generation in El Salvador?

## **B. FMLN LEADERSHIP UNDER PRESIDENT FUNES: 2009–2014**

El Salvador, with its large population relative to its size, is more than ever a victim of urbanization. Large crowds of unemployed and underutilized youths stagnate around the centers of power in El Salvador. Into this potentially volatile mix—instead of guerrilla rhetoric or fervor for land reform—gang violence and transnational crime have made inroads to the extent that the state is at odds over what to do next. According to the 2013 UNODC Global Homicide Report, risk factors for high levels of lethal violence include “unemployment, poor standards of education, the presence of youth gangs and organized crime, poverty and inequality, and accessibility to firearms.”<sup>200</sup>

The PNC, the policing force charged with maintaining internal security, has failed in its mission. These shortcomings have manifested themselves in a general level of impunity for crime and high levels of corruption within the PNC. Ávalos refers to corruption within the PNC as its own “original sin: the inclusion of former soldiers that worked with criminal groups and preserved a closed power structure that prevented any authority from investigating them for over two decades... [allowing] criminal bands formed in the 1980s as weapon or drug smugglers to forge connections with the PNC and to develop into sophisticated drug trafficking organizations.”<sup>201</sup> While President Cerén ran and won office on a platform of anticorruption, concerns about corruption are not as strong

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<sup>200</sup> “Global Study on Homicide 2013,” 25.

<sup>201</sup> Héctor Silva Ávalos, “Corruption in El Salvador,” Working paper for *Center for Latin American and Latino Studies*, March 2014, <http://ssrn.com/abstract=2419174>, 2.



in El Salvador as they are in other Northern Triangle countries.<sup>202</sup> For example, former Salvadoran President Francisco Flores was arrested in September 2014 and is awaiting trial for embezzling some \$15 million from Taiwan while in office; it is possible that Salvadoran citizens think that at least something is being done to fight corruption. Even still, the most recent Congressional Research Service report provided to Congress alleges that corruption is one of the major challenges facing El Salvador.<sup>203</sup> Corrupt or not, the PNC has been unable to cope with the mounting wave a crime, and with resources stretched thin, is unable to prosecute individual investigations the way they should be.

Table 6. Salvadoran homicides and homicide rates per 100,000 people, 2009–2013<sup>204</sup>

	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>
<b>Homicides</b>	4382	4004	4371	2594	2499
<b>Rate per 100,000</b>	71.2	64.8	70.3	41.5	39.7

The problem of gang violence is the largest single national security challenge to the Salvadoran state. Central America saw declining homicide rates from 1995 to 2004, but this trend dramatically reversed in 2007. This has resulted in one of the highest sub-regional homicide rates in the world (26.5 percent per 100,000 people in 2012).<sup>205</sup> Since Mexico escalated its war on the Mexican drug cartels in 2006, illicit drug flows ballooned significantly in Northern Triangle countries: Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador. Many Mexican cartels have shifted parts of their operations to Central America under the cognizance of, or association with, local *maras*, operating with higher levels of impunity.<sup>206</sup>

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<sup>202</sup> “Central America: Leaders Promote Anticorruption Efforts with Mixed Results,” *Open Source Center*, 11 November 2014.  
[https://www.opensource.gov/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS\\_0\\_0\\_200\\_203\\_0\\_43/content/Display/29760999/CorruptionNorthernTriangle\\_11Nov14\\_Final.pdf](https://www.opensource.gov/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS_0_0_200_203_0_43/content/Display/29760999/CorruptionNorthernTriangle_11Nov14_Final.pdf), 4.

<sup>203</sup> Seelke, *El Salvador*, 10.

<sup>204</sup> “Situación de la Seguridad,” 4.

<sup>205</sup> “Global Study on Homicide 2013,” 33. The countries cited as to having contributed the most to this sub-regional homicide rate were El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, and Jamaica.

<sup>206</sup> Latin America: Regional Overview,” *The Economist Intelligence Unit*. September 2014, 6.

The question posed to President Mauricio Funes at the outset of his election was what to do about the problem. The FMLN is a liberal party, so social programs as a long-term solution to citizen insecurity was expected. Yet it would take time for social programs to result in anything tangible. Meanwhile gang violence and PNC ineffective left no safe harbor for social programs to take root. A dramatic measure was required, and so Funes turned to the military.



Figure 5. Ex-president Mauricio Funes<sup>207</sup>

The precedent of using the armed forces to provide citizen security while the national and local police units professionalized was already set by Mexico in their war on drugs. Sotomayor argues that militarization in the 2000s in Central America was an

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<sup>207</sup> Photo: *La Nación*, accessed 11 February 2015, [http://www.nacion.com/mundo/centroamerica/Funes-presidente-Salvador-donaciones-Taiwan\\_0\\_1383261853.html](http://www.nacion.com/mundo/centroamerica/Funes-presidente-Salvador-donaciones-Taiwan_0_1383261853.html).

unintended consequence, or spillover effect, of the Mexican Drug War, in which the Mexican state heavily utilized their armed forces as the front line against the drug cartels entrenched in Mexico.<sup>208</sup> Yet putting the armed forces back on the streets is a troubling step for a country that had so relatively recently fought a civil war. Doyle describes the dilemma as follows:

On one hand, there appear to be few options to deal with pronounced lawlessness in parts of the country, especially given the insufficient numbers of PNC, their inexperience, and lack of specialized training. On the other hand, this precedent seriously challenges one of the most critical aspects of the constitutional reforms resulting from the entire peace process—that of permanently removing the military from internal security functions.<sup>209</sup>

Funes made good on his electoral promise, and the FAES has accompanied PNC patrols in San Salvador since 2009. The progression of President Mauricio Funes' reliance on the Salvadoran Army patrols has been astounding; in his first year in office he increased the number of effectives by 259 percent (from 1,975 to 6,500 soldiers).<sup>210</sup> The count of soldiers committed to internal security in 2014 has reached 11,200 effectives—a 467 percent increase since the FMLN party took office (Figure 6).<sup>211</sup> Funes' use of the PNC and Salvadoran Army effectives is covered in more detail in Chapter V.

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<sup>208</sup> Sotomayor, "Militarization in Mexico," 49.

<sup>209</sup> Doyle and Sambanis, *Making War and Building Peace*, 209.

<sup>210</sup> "Situación de la Seguridad," 90.

<sup>211</sup> Percentage computed from data presented in Gráfico 3.1 in "Situación de la Seguridad," 90. See also Figure 9 in Chapter V of this thesis.



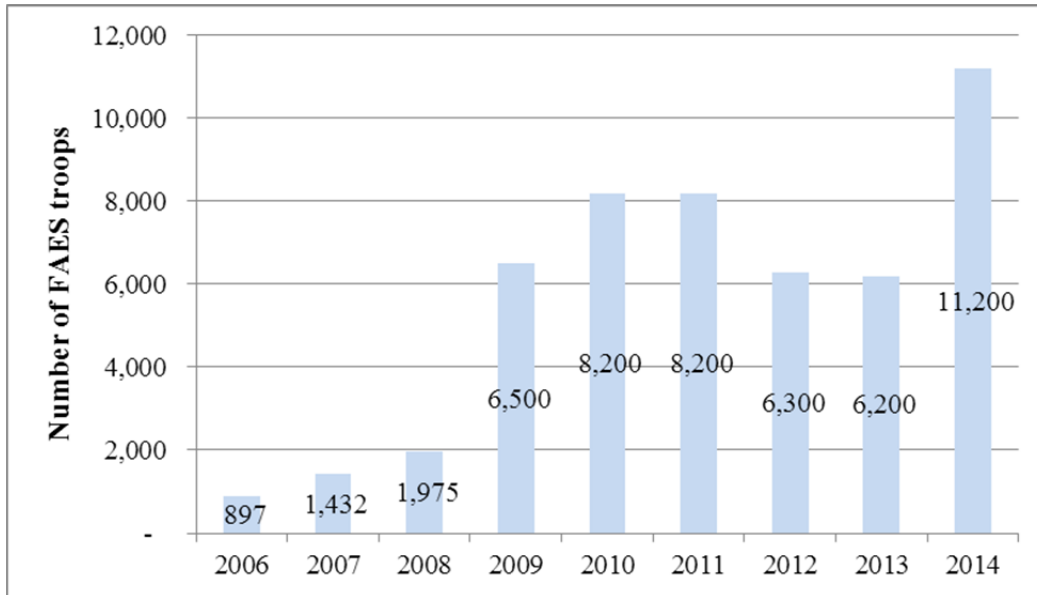


Figure 6. Soldiers assigned to public security, 2006–2014<sup>212</sup>

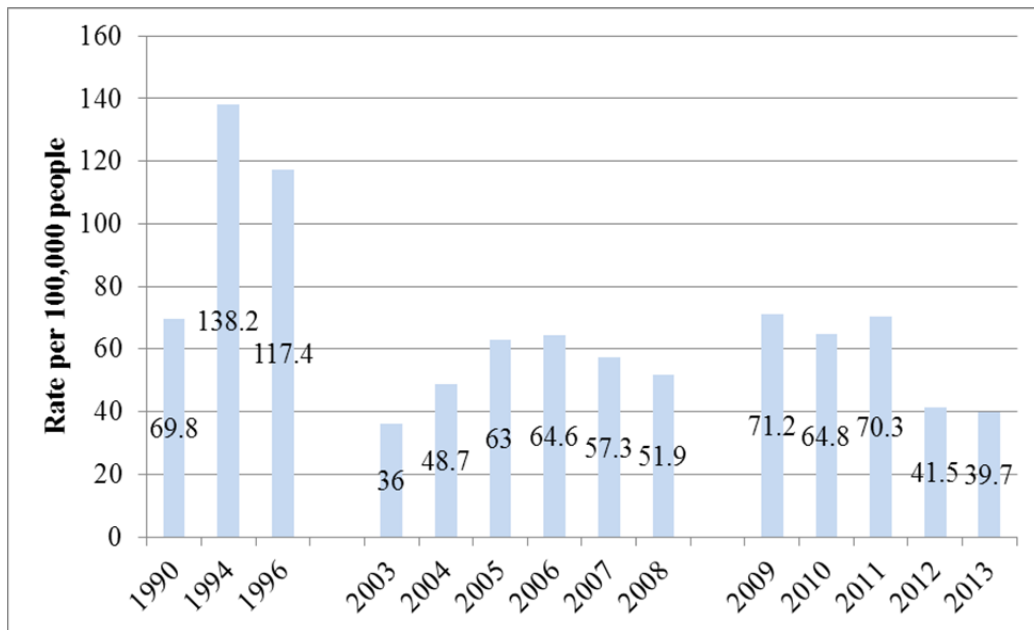


Figure 7. Salvadoran homicide rate per 100,000 people, 1990–2013<sup>213</sup>

<sup>212</sup> Data provided by the Ministry of Defense (2006–12) and the Office of the President (2013–14) and found in “Situación de la Seguridad,” 90.

<sup>213</sup> “Situación de la Seguridad,” 3.

Aside from deploying FAES troops to the streets, President Funes oversaw another innovation meant to improve citizen security.<sup>214</sup> The gang truce that lasted from 2012–14 was an unofficially initiated event in which the state—via military and religious leaders—negotiated terms with an extra-state entity in order to stabilize the escalating violence in the region. According to UNODC statistics, shortly after the gang truce, El Salvador’s homicide rate dropped 40 percent, in addition to the general level of crime dropping.<sup>215</sup> Yet with the end of the truce in mid-2013, levels of violence again spiked. The gang truce is also covered more closely in Chapter V.

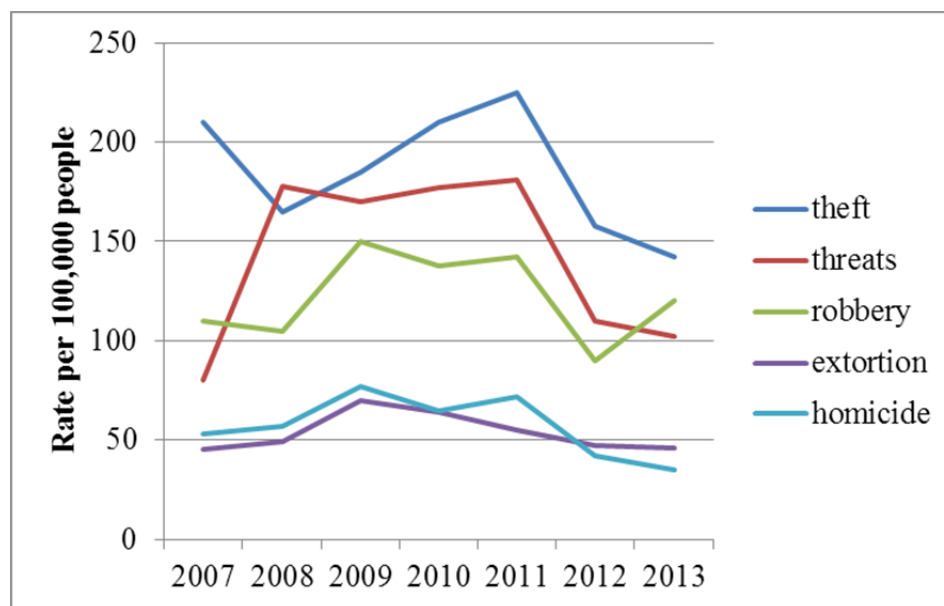


Figure 8. Rates of selected crimes, El Salvador, 2007–2013<sup>216</sup>

<sup>214</sup> President Funes has denied any involvement with the planning of the gang truce, but he never did anything to hinder the government’s complicity in the truce, especially once more favorable crime statistics were produced. See Geoff Thale, Joseph Bateman, and Ana Goerd, “One Year into the Gang Truce in El Salvador: Can the Funes Administration Turn the Fragile Truce into Sustainable Public Policy?” Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA), 26 April 2013, [http://www.justice.gov/eoir/vll/country/WOLA/elSalvador/1year\\_gangTruce.pdf](http://www.justice.gov/eoir/vll/country/WOLA/elSalvador/1year_gangTruce.pdf), 2.

<sup>215</sup> “Global Study on Homicide 2013,” 34.

<sup>216</sup> Data provided by the National Police of El Salvador, found in “Global Study on Homicide 2013,” 46.

El Salvador is now witnessing the bitter harvest of their civil war combined with the uncontrollable influence of transnational criminal profits. How does one gauge militarization amongst the urban slums? These urban poor have not been utilized or militarized by the state as with previous generations. Yet since the signing of the peace accords in 1992 and the dismantling of much of the FAES, the military has actively maintained a toehold in El Salvador. For example, the military reinvigorated their infrastructural, public health, and literacy programs, while entering into new environmental conservation and reforestation projects. As Walter and Williams assert, “On the one hand, the military’s frenetic activities were a product of its lack of mission and fear of becoming irrelevant. On the other hand, these activities were both needed and fell well within the military’s tradition of civic action and desire to maintain its traditional clientele in the countryside.”<sup>217</sup> El Salvador’s defense white paper dated September 1998—the current white paper on file with the U.S. State Department—details the FAES’s commitment to development and social programs and is titled “La Nación Salvadoreña: Su Defensa, Seguridad y Desarrollo” (“The Salvadoran Nation: Your Defense, Security, and Development”).<sup>218</sup> A 2013 report categorizes the missions of the FAES as public security and institutional order, while the functions of the FAES in its domestic mission as equal part police, fireman, and social worker.<sup>219</sup>

The Salvadoran military has done a great deal to improve its public image since the civil war. Ironically, the public support for the military’s domestic mission soared as the FMLN took office and President Funes more than doubled their numbers. Even amidst mounting reports by the citizenry of human rights violations at the hands of Salvadoran soldiers in 2011 and 2012, the FAES still maintain a much higher level of public support than does the PNC.<sup>220</sup> Sadly enough, the gains in popularity of the armed forces has more to do with the general level of fear and insecurity, and that the

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<sup>217</sup> Walter and Williams, “Military and Democratization,” 73.

<sup>218</sup> El Salvador Ministry of Defense, *La Nación Salvadoreña: Su Defensa, Seguridad y Desarrollo* (San Salvador: Ministry of Defense, 1998).

<sup>219</sup> “Report on the Security Sector,” 38–40.

<sup>220</sup> “Situación de la Seguridad,” 95.

Salvadoran government is taking positive steps to address the problem. For instance, in 2011, 76.4 percent of the Salvadoran population was preoccupied with rising crime rates.<sup>221</sup> Just as confidence in the ability of the PNC to maintain public security waned, the FAES received a ringing endorsement of public opinion between 2009 and 2012 at an average level of above 40 percent.<sup>222</sup>

Yet these gains in popularity in no way compare to the traditional grassroots network the military once had. Rather, many Salvadoran citizens have been pulled into the orbit of gang membership and crime. In a profile of Salvadoran gangs in 2008, Wolf asserts the following:

Despite a generally greater geographical dispersion, gangs continue to be concentrated in the marginal communities of the capital and the municipalities of Apopa, Soyapango, Ilopango, and Mejicanos. Gang youths in these areas are predominantly male and come from low-income, dysfunctional families. The average entry age is between eleven and fifteen years, but members are now largely young adults rather than adolescents. Most have only intermediate levels of education and left school just prior to or after joining the gang.<sup>223</sup>

The gangs of El Salvador possess a military quality in their organization, their ability to extract value, and their willingness to employ violence as a coercive measure. Estimated gang members certainly have grown in size comparable to the military. In 2004, El Salvador had an estimated 8,714 gang members.<sup>224</sup> By 2009, that number had grown to 17,000, an unprecedented 7,000 of these in Salvadoran prisons.<sup>225</sup> Figures 9 and 10 demonstrate that although El Salvador shares the gang problem with Honduras and Guatemala in terms of gang population size, the percentage of the population that belongs to a gang is over twice as high in El Salvador.

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<sup>221</sup> “Situación de la Seguridad,” 94.

<sup>222</sup> Derived from table in “Situación de la Seguridad,” 94–5.

<sup>223</sup> Sonja Wolf, “Street Gangs of El Salvador,” in *Maras: Gang Violence and Security in Central America*, ed. Thomas Bruneau, Lucía Dammert, and Elizabeth Skinner (Austin, TX: University Press, 2011), 47.

<sup>224</sup> Wolf, “Street Gangs of El Salvador,” 46.

<sup>225</sup> Bruneau, “Introduction,” in *Maras*, 12.

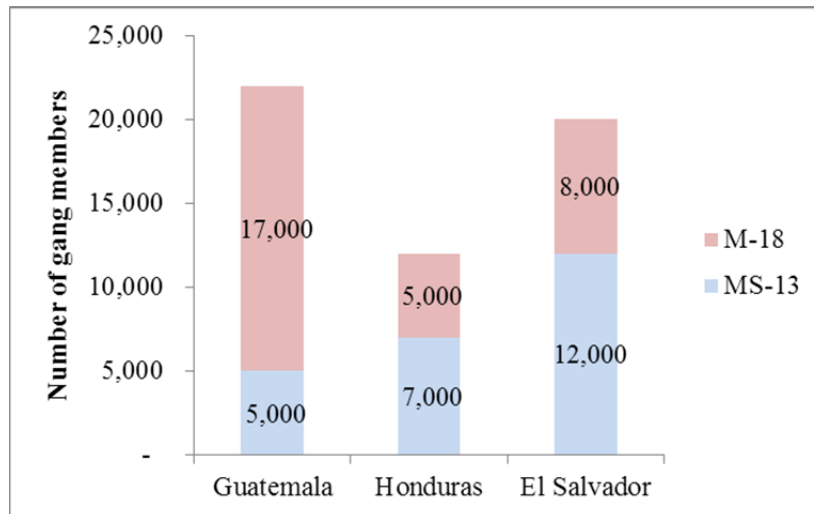


Figure 9. *Mara* membership in the Northern Triangle, 2012<sup>226</sup>

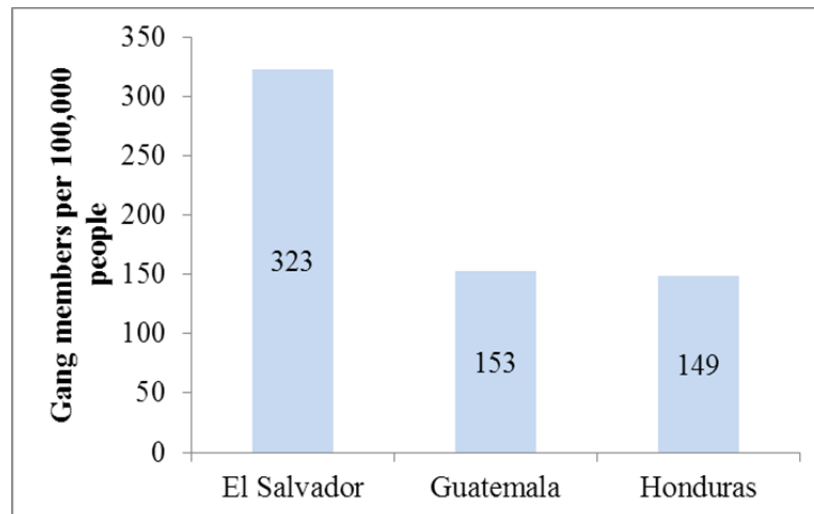


Figure 10. Gang members per 100,000 individuals, 2012<sup>227</sup>

Although these youths have not received the same military training of their fathers and grandfathers, they are equipped with many of their same firearms and are ready to use them with the same ferocity. In 2012, gang related violence in Latin America

<sup>226</sup> Data from law enforcement interviews, found in “Transnational Organized Crime in Central America and the Caribbean: A Threat Assessment,” UNODC, Vienna: United Nations Publishing, 2012, 29.

<sup>227</sup> “Transnational Organized Crime,” 29.

accounted for 30 percent of total homicides.<sup>228</sup> In 2014, gang-related homicides in El Salvador accounted for 50 percent of the total.<sup>229</sup> Even though the statistics for gang-related violence are high, Wolf is careful put the *maras*’ and *pandillas*’ tendency toward violence into perspective: “Decades of authoritarianism and the subsequent civil war normalized the use of aggression among large parts of society, not just among gang members.”<sup>230</sup>

### C. ANALYZING TRENDS IN MILITARIZATION

From this brief survey of militarization in El Salvador, a few general trends may be observed. First, as a consequence of the history of El Salvador as a commodity producing country, as Paige notes, the social and economic structures “were shaped by a single commodity: coffee.”<sup>231</sup> The enduring legacy of this commodities market is replete with outcomes, chiefly among them the necessity of the elites and the state to collude and produce a corrective apparatus capable of maintaining the unequal status quo. More to the point, the connection the state had with its people was not specifically democratic with the vote, nor was it welfare-based with social programs; the Salvadoran state identified itself as and communicated through the Salvadoran Army and its various outcroppings in government.

The second significant trend of Salvadoran militarization—partly a result of the aforementioned trend—is the cultural identification with military organizations and structures. The first military dictatorship of President Hernández Martínez was forged in the fires of confrontation with the state: leftists seeking land reform and conservative elites—supported by the military. The resulting purge of at least eight to ten thousand people, *La Matanza*, served as a reminder that El Salvador was white and black: the

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<sup>228</sup> “Latin America: Regional Overview,” 6.

<sup>229</sup> Associated Press, “El Salvador: Se acaba la tregua entre las peligrosas maras,” *El Comercio*, March 4, 2014, <http://elcomercio.pe/mundo/latinoamerica/salvador-se-acaba-tregua-entre-maras-noticia-1713568>.

<sup>230</sup> Wolf, “Street Gangs of El Salvador,” 54.

<sup>231</sup> Jeffrey Paige, *Coffee and Power* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 3.

peasantry is either with the state, or against it.<sup>232</sup> During the turbulent years of the Cold War, society again polarized. Those seeking land reform and greater social equity found no official outlet for their cries; those who spoke up were often silenced by the state security apparatus. Thus, the FMLN took up arms and fled into the jungle as guerrilla outlaws chasing Castro's revolution. The polarization of the Salvadoran people only intensified as the coercive actions of the Salvadoran state increased. The record violence of the late 1970s precipitated a military coup followed by civil war. The condition of civil war necessitates the bulk of society to relate to military organizations of one form or another, either by membership or by compliance or defiance to military rule.

More recently, I argue, the virtual war between the gangs in El Salvador, and the collateral damage this has inflicted on Salvadoran society, has polarized society and pushed many to choose sides. Many Salvadorans have chosen the gangs; still more have had the decision forced upon them. For instance, a shop owner extorted by a gang may not necessarily be in favor of said gang, but is certainly complicit in its criminal activity. A family that is being supported by a gang member is drawn into protection of that gang member, as both a son or daughter and a breadwinner. These peripheral relationships with gangs formed out of fear come in varying degrees of strength, but one message is very clear: keep the authorities out.<sup>233</sup> As PNC officers patrol crime scenes wearing ski masks for their own protection while *mara* gang members flaunt their elaborate tattoos for all to see, it is no challenge to divine which side might be coming out ahead. Those caught in the middle must adapt to a new tension of silence. Many have been massacred—and continue to be—as lessons to what happens to those who talk. Salvadoran gangs have resorted to mutilating or decapitating their victims as a way to ensure societal permissiveness and a general level of terror.<sup>234</sup> The militarization of El Salvador has continued to bifurcate society such that militant groups use violence as a means to an end. As in the case of the gang truce in 2012, the gangs even rose in prominence enough to negotiate with the state. The resulting pact formation that comes

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<sup>232</sup> Estimated death toll provided in Stanley, *Protection Racket State*, 42.

<sup>233</sup> Wolf, "Street Gangs of El Salvador," 55.

<sup>234</sup> Wolf, "Street Gangs of El Salvador," 53. Also see "Transnational Organized Crime," 43.

from these violent standoffs yields organizational autonomy, a trait very similar to the historic *modus operandi* of the FAES.

The third general trend taken from this survey of Salvadoran militarization is more apparent in that it has a physical manifestation: guns. In the Americas, according to UNODC statistics reported in 2013, 66 percent of all murders are committed using firearms; this figure is 61 percent higher than the global average to give some context.<sup>235</sup> Table 7 illustrates the use of firearms in homicides from 2005–2012.

Table 7. Homicides with firearms as a percentage of total homicides in El Salvador, 2005–2012<sup>236</sup>

Year	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
% Firearms	77	78	80	67	76	73	70	62

Many of these firearms are derelicts of the civil war: M-16s and AK-47s.<sup>237</sup> The presence of a robust drug trafficking network through Central America has elevated of other illicit flows to include firearms. Table 8 illustrates the massive inflows of firearms into El Salvador from 2006 to 2011.

Table 8. Number of firearms entering El Salvador, 2006–2011<sup>238</sup>

Year	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Number of firearms	6,332	8,611	12,225	23,324	35,575	25,151

<sup>235</sup> Figures taken from table in “Global Study on Homicide 2013,” 16.

<sup>236</sup> Data from the United Nations Surveys on Crime Trends, found in Table 8.3 of “Global Study on Homicide 2013,” 141.

<sup>237</sup> Wolf, “Street Gangs of El Salvador,” 53. Also see “Transnational Organized Crime,” 59.

<sup>238</sup> Data from the El Salvador División de Armas y explosivos de la PNC y Ministerio de la Defensa, found in “Situación de la Seguridad,” 17.



Most import firearms are pistols legally purchased from the United States. While military rifles have not undergone revolutionary changes since the end of the Cold War, demand for their purchase does not match the much wider influx of handguns.<sup>239</sup> The UNODC Threat Assessment of Transnational Organized Crime in Central America identifies the real impetus of the firearms market in the region:

Rather, the problem is leakage. Guns leak from licit civilian use to illicit use. They leak from licit military and police use to illicit use. And they leak across borders, in every conceivable direction<sup>240</sup>

While it is true that guns do not kill people, as the saying goes, the mass proliferation of firearms in El Salvador has facilitated at least one part of a murderer's task. Moreover, the tradition of firearms in the home and on the streets has accustomed the average Salvadoran citizen to the very real specter of violence in everyday scenarios, while at the same time desensitizing a younger generation of Salvadorans to the presence of firearms.<sup>241</sup> Partly as a result, more than a third of Salvadorans have alleged to be victim to robbery or assault during their lifetime.<sup>242</sup> Additionally, large arsenals are useful as long as there are armies to wield them. The *maras* and *pandillas* of El Salvador have a very real demand for such weapons, and they are all the stronger for having this resource in spades.

Finally, the proliferation of firearms in El Salvador has elevated the stakes for the players involved. Gang members have abandoned their previous predilection for knives or other weapons for commercial and military firearms.<sup>243</sup> That said 2010–2012 saw an upsurge in the percentage of murders committed with knives.<sup>244</sup> The arsenal and level of violence demonstrated on the part of criminals has either prompted, or been the result

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<sup>239</sup> “Transnational Organized Crime,” 60.

<sup>240</sup> “Transnational Organized Crime,” 60.

<sup>241</sup> Wolf, “Street Gangs of El Salvador,” 53.

<sup>242</sup> “Victimization a Sad Fact of Life in Northern Triangle,” U.S. *Department of State Office of Opinion Research*, 7 November 2014, [https://www.opensource.gov/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS\\_0\\_0\\_200\\_203\\_0\\_43/content/Display/29749273/INROpinionAnalysis7Nov14.pdf](https://www.opensource.gov/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS_0_0_200_203_0_43/content/Display/29749273/INROpinionAnalysis7Nov14.pdf), 1.

<sup>243</sup> Wolf, “Street Gangs of El Salvador,” 47–8.

<sup>244</sup> Data from the El Salvador Instituto de Medicina Legal, found in “Situación de la Seguridad,” 18.

of—chicken or the egg—the weaponry utilized by the state. The PNC and Salvadoran soldiers patrol San Salvador with semi-automatic rifles and grenades. Another stark statistic, further attesting to the public’s lack of confidence in the state to provide security against the domestic criminal menace, in 2013 the number of private security employees in El Salvador totaled 28,639, 30 percent larger than the PNC and 370 percent larger than the FAES assigned to the internal security mission that year.<sup>245</sup>

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<sup>245</sup> “Public Security Index,” 65.

## **V. IMPLICATIONS ON SALVADORAN POLICY**

Twenty years after the end of the Salvadoran Civil War, El Salvador has made dramatic strides in terms of consolidating as a democracy and reinventing a society that had known repressive military rule since the Great Depression. Yet the presidency of Mauricio Funes, 2009–2014, indicates some of the shortcomings in that process. This chapter first considers the intersection of civil-military relations and militarization in El Salvador; I argue that security policy formation is the connection. This chapter next considers the current trends in civil-military relations and militarization in El Salvador, and evaluates a couple of specific cases from 2009–2014 in which these trends have had implications. The first case, that of General David Munguía Payés, illustrates how high level state security policy—the rapid inflation of the FAES in the internal security role—was formulated and instituted in a non-democratic manner, underlying a weak Salvadoran civil-military structure. The second case, the gang truce of 2012, examines how the Funes Administration covertly pursued an unpopular national strategy with unknown and untested implications.

### **A. SECURITY POLICY FORMATION**

While there is no ready-made template from which to accurately capture civil-military relationships from country to country, the CCMR's trinity provides an excellent launching point to begin quantifying and qualifying the civil-military environment. I have found that El Salvador indeed meets many of the metrics established in the trinity, including effectiveness with their external mission; budgetary and manpower efficiency metrics; and policy enactment, defining objectives, and formulating defense policy. Despite these areas of success, El Salvador lacks in several important areas, including a lack of effectiveness coping with their larger internal security mission; shortcomings within their ministry of defense, including a dearth of civilian involvement, limited division of power amongst the services, and a poor buffer to the source of executive civilian power; and, finally, poor oversight mechanisms. These weak areas highlight the road El Salvador must travel to improve civil-military relations within the country.

At least on the face of it, democratic civilian control has been achieved in El Salvador. Certainly the peaceful transfer of power from the ARENA Party to the FMLN party in 2009 is a positive sign of the maturing democracy of El Salvador, but more to the point for this argument, a good auger for positively trending civil-military relations. Yet a closer look at some of the peculiar inner workings of military-executive relations during the Funes Administration indicates some weakness.

Militarization in El Salvador has perhaps a more enduring legacy than poor tradition of civil-military relations. For instance, civil-military relations affect the populace through state policy generation: where it comes from, what laws are enacted, how involved the military is within El Salvador. Militarization, however, is the living echo of military activity that has historically reached down to the lowliest peasants in the countryside.

There exists a link between civil-military relations and militarization, and the connection seems to be where policy formation affects the internal security mission of El Salvador. I have already identified the internal mission of El Salvador's military to be a significantly weak competency in the category of effectiveness. Salvadoran civilian and military leaders have yet to come up with a consistent strategy with which to reduce the levels of domestic violence that plague the country. The gang truce of 2012, disregarding the manner in which it was conducted, seemed to be one innovative method that temporarily reduced the homicide rate within the country, but only served as a stop-gap measure.

The FAES—whether by abuse as a political promise to the people or their desire to regain former prominence in the sector of internal security—has also increased its presence greatly within San Salvador and other violent departments of the country. The military has taken on, by way of supplementing the ailing PNC with manpower, hardware, and tactics, a significant and seemingly permanent security competency, one not seen since Salvadoran soldiers patrolled the streets during the civil war. Salvadoran internal defense policy has led to a militarization of the PNC. At the same time, the use of the FAES as a campaign promise as the silver bullet to improve citizen security by the FMLN has politicized the FAES. I study two cases in more depth in the following

sections to illustrate the connection I believe exists between civil-military relations and militarization in El Salvador.

## **B. CASE ANALYSIS: A PRESIDENT AND HIS ARMY**

President Mauricio Funes demonstrated some level of role confusion as to his most senior and controversial military leader. Retired Colonel David Munguía Payés—allegedly sympathetic to the left and cashiered by the ARENA Party—was brought out of retirement to lead the Ministry of Defense as a general when President Funes took office in 2009. In June 2011, Payés publicly retired from active duty causing some debate as to whether he was preparing to run for the presidency. Two years later, in November 2011, Funes placed Payés as Minister of Justice and Security. In May 2012, shortly after the gang truce scandal broke, El Salvador’s tenacious Supreme Court ruled Payés as unfit for the position; the court ruled that his credentials as a retired military officer—as well as those of PNC director General Francisco Salinas—were inconsistent with the ideals of public security laid out in the 1992 peace accords. Incidentally, Payés’ replacement by Ricardo Perdomo, ardent critic of gang mediation, hampered any further negotiations and led to an overnight upsurge in homicides. After a few months as presidential advisor to President Funes, Payés was again installed in the post of minister of Defense in July 2013. While he serves in that post as a retired military officer, Payés continues to wear the uniform and serve in his former military capacity.<sup>246</sup> Many thought the election of Sánchez Cerén would result in Payés’ ouster, considering his controversial reputation, but Payés remained on in the military’s top position.<sup>247</sup> In June 2014, Attorney General Luis Martínez, another harsh critic of the gang negotiations, announced a probe into recent attacks against PNC and FAES officers by gang members with military grade firearms, singling out General Payés as being investigated for his involvement.<sup>248</sup> Shortly after, President Cerén publicly asked Martínez to continue his investigation into Payés’

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<sup>246</sup> Ricardo Vaquerano, “Funes vuelve a nombrar a Munguía Payés como ministro de Defensa,” *El faro.net*, 12 July 2013, <http://www.elfaro.net/es/201307/noticias/12657/>.

<sup>247</sup> Seth Robbins, “El Salvador’s Military: Arms Dealer to the Maras?” *In Sight Crime: Organized Crime in the Americas*, 16 June 2014, <http://www.insightcrime.org/news-analysis/el-salvadors-military-arms-dealer-to-the-maras>.

<sup>248</sup> Robbins, “El Salvador’s Military.”

involvement, but to be careful to not make any accusations until all the facts are known.<sup>249</sup> Farah speculates that “there was a general feeling that if [Cerén] cut ties with Munguía Payés immediately, it would ignite an even more significant wave of gang violence.”<sup>250</sup> Regardless, the case has been out of the press for at least six months since.



Figure 11. Salvadoran Minister of Defense General David Munguía Payés<sup>251</sup>

The curious case of General Payés highlights many shortcomings in the structure of both the military and civilian leadership from 2009–2014. It is clear that the FMLN civilian leadership has control over the appointment of high ranking officers, having

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<sup>249</sup> “Sánchez Cerén pide no condenar por adelantado a Munguía Payés,” *Contra Punto*. 11 June 2014, <http://www.contrapunto.com.sv/cpnacionales/nacionales/gobierno/Sánchez-Cerén-pide-no-condenar-por-adelantado-a-Munguía-Payés>.

<sup>250</sup> Douglas Farah, senior fellow at the International Assessment and Strategy Center, quoted in Robbins, “El Salvador’s Military.”

<sup>251</sup> Photo: *La Prensa Gráfica*, accessed 11 February 2015, <http://mediacenter.laprensagrafica.com/audios/a/primeras-declaraciones-de-ministro-de-justicia-y-seguridad-david-munguia-payes>.

shuffled Payés in and out of retirement into high profile positions. Yet this control hardly seems democratic. There was no legislative oversight into Payés' appointment as Minister of Defense in 2009, Minister of Justice and Security in 2011, and again Minister of Defense in 2013. Additionally, the state apparatus did not operate in unison regarding the direction the FMLN leadership chose; the actions of both Attorney General Luis Martínez and Minister of Justice and Security Ricardo Perdomo seem contrary to Funes' policy of having the government serve as a mediator with the gangs.

This case also indicates some weaknesses within the military as well. Although the military maintains some level of autonomy, they seem to have no institutional control as to who rises up through the ranks and is ready to serve in their top billets. Payés, under Funes' direction, greatly expanded the role of soldiers on the streets. The introduction of almost 10,000 Salvadoran soldiers to the role of internal security since the FMLN took power is a significant uptick in militarization. President Funes stated that “we are engaged in a new war, a new fight against a scourge that threatens national sovereignty [and that] these new enemies are strongly-armed criminal gangs, economically powerful organizations that operate in our territory as well as in all the region of Central America.”<sup>252</sup> With the addition of thousands of FAES soldiers and such strong political rhetoric, one might hope for a clear, coherent, transparent, and democratic policy for their use. Presidential Decree Number 52, in effect since May 2013, states that the FAES will support the PNC to maintain internal peace, plan and execute operations against criminal gangs, and conduct joint patrols to dissuade criminal violence.<sup>253</sup>

Outside of a few official statements, however, Salvadorans are left to wonder the direction of national security. The PNC, the force responsible for internal security under the peace accords, has been undercut by FAES involvement. In an unhappy irony, the

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<sup>252</sup> President Funes quoted in Fernando Romero, “Funes prepara nuevo rol FAES en seguridad,” *La Prensa Gráfica*, 1 December 2011, <http://www.laprensaGráfica.com/el-salvador/politica/234317-funes-prepara-nuevo-rol-faes-en-seguridad.html>; translation found in “A Comparative Atlas of Defense in Latin America and Caribbean,” *Red de Seguridad y Defensa de América Latina* (Buenos Aires: RESDAL, 2012), 205.

<sup>253</sup> Text from El Decreto Ejecutivo N° 52 found in Walter Murcia, “La militarización de la seguridad pública en El Salvador,” *Hemisferio Zero.com*, 4 April 2013, <http://hemisferiozero.com/2013/04/04/la-militarizacion-de-la-seguridad-publica-en-el-salvador-ii/>; paraphrased by the author.

budget for the increase in the number of Salvadoran soldiers patrolling San Salvador and other violent zones of the country has come out of the PNC's budget.<sup>254</sup> And while the public shows much higher confidence levels in the FAES than the PNC (Figure 12), public support has waned since 2011 owing partly to mounting reports of mistreatment, summary executions, and human rights violations at the hands of the FAES (Table 9). The FAES are now highly politicized arbiters who interact with the public daily. Sotomayor argues using the armed forces creates an insecurity dilemma in that violence spikes and the professionalism of the armed forces is thus challenged by the countervailing pressures of corruption and intimidation—particularly disconcerting in El Salvador, which has a dark military history.<sup>255</sup> Unfortunately, due to the secretive manner in which the policy has been formulated, and the politicization of General Payés' role as secret arbiter of the gang truce—now with possible criminal charges pending—throws into question all FAES activity within El Salvador.



Figure 12. Percent public support for the PNC and FAES, 2001–2012<sup>256</sup>

<sup>254</sup> “Situación de la Seguridad,” 92–3.

<sup>255</sup> Sotomayor, “Militarization in Mexico,” 50, 54.

<sup>256</sup> Data provided by IUDOP, found in “Situación de la Seguridad,” 95.



Table 9. Human rights complaints leveled against the FAES, 2009–2012<sup>257</sup>

	2009	2010	2011	2012
<b>Reports</b>	57	215	363	237

Academics have closely followed El Salvador’s development. In 2005, during the conservative ARENA presidency of Antonio Saca, Bruneau summarized El Salvador’s case: “In sum, there is awareness and overall movement in the right direction of qualified civilians assuming control, but the creation of an institutional basis is difficult and slow.”<sup>258</sup> That same year, Pion-Berlin asserted that “not even a hint is present that they have any interest in [democratic civilian control].”<sup>259</sup> In 2013, Martínez alleged that El Salvador had a long way to go in terms of removing the military from areas of administration and developing an appropriate level of legislative oversight.<sup>260</sup> Judging from the case of General Payés and the ramping up of FAES involvement in the country, El Salvador is still searching for the appropriate level of institutionalized military participation in government.

### C. CASE ANALYSIS: NEGOTIATING WITH MURDERERS

Much like the undemocratic manner in which President Funes and his top general shaped state security policy, the gang truce of 2012 emerged amidst scandal and denial—unfortunately the end of which is still unknown. Before coming to the truce, I will first describe the circumstances that led the state to consider negotiating with murderers.

In response to mounting crime levels at the turn of the century, the conservative ARENA presidencies of Francisco Flores (1999-2004) and Antonio Saca (2004-2009) unrolled *mano dura* and *super mano dura* programs. Ungar suggests these policies “are popular, easy to formulate and enact, and the best guarantee for quick results during a

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<sup>257</sup> Data provided by the Counsel for the Defense of Human Rights in El Salvador; found in “Situación de la Seguridad,” 95.

<sup>258</sup> Bruneau, “Military in Post-Conflict Societies,” 229.

<sup>259</sup> David S. Pion-Berlin, “Political Management of the Military in Latin America,” *Military Review* 85, no. 1 (2005): 27.

<sup>260</sup> Martínez, “Objectives,” 39.

limited time in office.”<sup>261</sup> Moreover, *mano dura* yields results in terms of arrests and seizures very quickly, and so gains popular support in the short term.<sup>262</sup> For example, fulfilling his campaign promise, President Saca enabled the police to arrest approximately 14,000 Salvadoran youths from 2004–2005.<sup>263</sup> The approach failed to mitigate the conditions that spawn more gang members, and in fact worsened the domestic insecurity of the state: prison overcrowding, innocent youths who join the gangs while in prison, and the overall cheapening of Salvadoran human rights—particularly among the young male population.

Public security crises typically force electoral battles into wedge issues.<sup>264</sup> In 2009 the FMLN battled ARENA over the issue of *mano dura*, asserting that the policy had worsened public insecurity and that innovative grassroots prevention and rehabilitation policies were required. While the FMLN won the election, President Mauricio Funes faced stark difficulties implementing the FMLN’s vision. The FMLN’s social programs failed to yield immediate results as they were institutional reforms for a long-term strategy. Under this level of scrutiny, President Funes abandoned his social programs in favor of a more expeditious solution. Cannon asserts that “Funes not only revived, but surpassed right-wing policies on violence, despite their previous ineffectiveness, and single-handedly ‘decided the return of the military to politics.’”<sup>265</sup>

As already discussed, Funes dramatically increased the numbers of troops to supplement the PNC mission. And while many of those imprisoned under earlier *mano dura* regimes had been released due to lack of evidence, the prison populations remained high under Funes. Additionally, conditions of Salvadoran prisons have been notoriously bad. In 2013, El Salvador maintained 19 prisons with a capacity of 8,110 adults.<sup>266</sup>

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<sup>261</sup> Ungar, *Policing Democracy*, 25.

<sup>262</sup> Ungar, *Policing Democracy*, 34.

<sup>263</sup> Clare Ribando Seelke, *Gangs in Central America* (CRS Report No. RL34112), Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2014, <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL34112.pdf>, 9.

<sup>264</sup> Ungar, *Policing Democracy*, 26.

<sup>265</sup> Barry Cannon, “Political Parties: The Right,” in *Handbook of Central American Governance*, ed. Diego Sánchez-Ancochea and Salvador Martí I Puig (New York: Routledge, 2014), 224–5.

<sup>266</sup> “Public Security Index,” 61.

Considering the total prison population presented in Table 10 and Figure 13, Salvadoran prisons are well-over their capacity. Along with overcrowding, many inmates, men and women, live in subhuman conditions. The trend in prison overcrowding and poor conditions is a problem throughout Latin America, though perhaps most acute in El Salvador.<sup>267</sup>

Table 10. Number and percent of the prison population, 2005–2013<sup>268</sup>

Year	Men	Percent	Women	Percent	Total prison population
2005	11,894	95.2	600	4.8	12,494
2008	17,496	93	1,315	7	18,811
2009	19,328	91.9	1,704	8.1	21,032
2010	21,700	90.6	2,260	9.4	23,960
2011	23,055	90.5	2,416	9.5	25,471
2012	24,386	90.2	2,647	9.8	27,033
2013	24,324	90.6	2,524	9.4	26,848

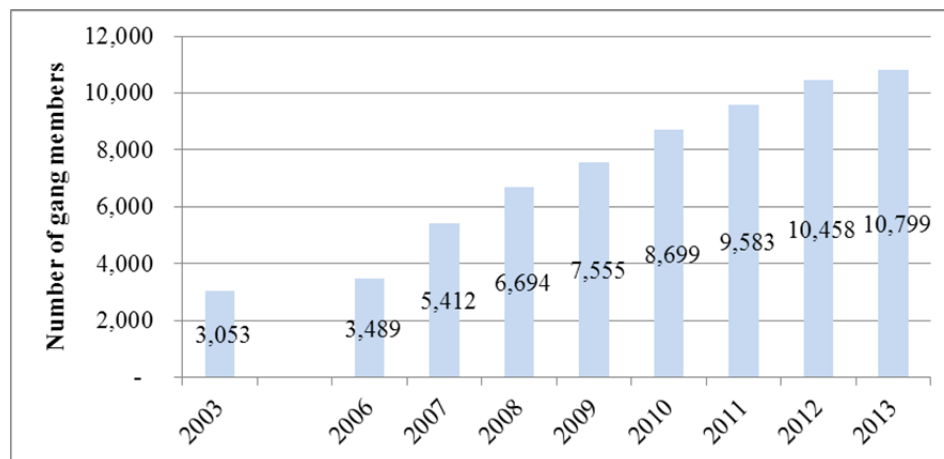


Figure 13. Gang population imprisoned, 2003–2013<sup>269</sup>

<sup>267</sup> Randal C. Archibold, “Inmate’s Lament: ‘Rather Be Dead Than Here,’” *The New York Times*, 13 March 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/14/world/americas/in-latin-america-prisons-condemned-to-crisis.html?pagewanted=all&r=0>; see also “A Journey into Hell,” *The Economist*, 22 September 2012, <http://www.economist.com/node/21563288>.

<sup>268</sup> Data from Dirección General de Centros Penales in San Salvador, found in “Situación de la Seguridad,” 121.

<sup>269</sup> “Situación de la Seguridad,” 124.

With the stage thus set—a lack of clear leadership under President Funes, an innovative moment for initiative of the left, public pressure to get something done, and the gangs having a political gripe with the state—the 2012 gang truce stealthily materialized. It was only after a Salvadoran paper, *El Faro.net*, investigated the sudden plunge of homicides in March 2012 and pressured the Funes Administration to comment that any of the facts became known. The paper confirmed that some 30 members of the top leadership of both *Mara Salvatrucha* and *Calle 18* had been transferred from maximum security lockup to lower security facilities with laxer visitation and cell phone restrictions. In exchange, reporters confirmed with several gang leaders on the street that they had received orders from their criminal superiors to avoid murder in order to facilitate further negotiations with the state.<sup>270</sup> A few days after the report, then Minister of Justice and Security General David Munguía Payés, confirmed that certain members had been relocated, but this was the result of intelligence received of an upcoming breakout attempt. President Funes denied all prior knowledge.<sup>271</sup> Finally, in September 2012, General Payés acknowledged that the government sought the help of former *guerrillero* and political leader Raúl Mijango and Monsignor Fabio Colindres, head of the Military Bishopric in El Salvador, to negotiate terms of a truce between the two most violent gangs in El Salvador.<sup>272</sup> Payés claimed that the truce was arranged under Funes' explicit authorization. Funes denied any knowledge of arranging the truce, but was quick to admit that the government, owing to the benefits obtained from the truce—the hundreds or thousands of living people that may presumably have ended up as homicide statistics without the truce—the government of El Salvador would facilitate further negotiations. After all, the truce yielded results that *mano dura* could not: in a little over a year, the average homicide rate dropped from 14 murders per day to 5.5

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<sup>270</sup> Óscar Martínez, “Making a Deal with Murderers,” *The New York Times*, 5 October 2013, [http://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/06/opinion/sunday/making-a-deal-with-murderers.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/06/opinion/sunday/making-a-deal-with-murderers.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0).

<sup>271</sup> Martínez, “Making a Deal with Murderers.”

<sup>272</sup> Carlos Martínez and José Luis Sanz, “La nueva verdad sobre la tregua entre pandillas,” *El Faro.net*, 11 September 2012, <http://www.salanegra.elfaro.net/es/201209/cronicas/9612/>.

murders in May 2013.<sup>273</sup> The governments and gangs of Guatemala and Honduras took notice of the truce in El Salvador; the two main gangs in Honduras agreed to a truce in May of 2013.<sup>274</sup>

Many facts are unknown about the particulars of the formation of the gang truce, but the ensuing scandal revealed political rifts within President Funes' administration, to include his relationship with his chief military advisor, General Payés. Whether Funes consented to the full scope of the gang truce beforehand or no, the manner in which the administration released the facts at least reveals an inappropriate level of national security management. Bruneau states that the recent truce signaled "the importance of political variables, and specifically the extent and coherence of the security sector as an aspect of state presence"<sup>275</sup> In the case of the truce, I argue that political variables undercut a coherent security response, and weakened the credibility of the Salvadoran national security policy process.

Pion-Berlin claims that informal civil-military relations occurs when "civilian officer holders and military personnel alike move 'off script,' taking liberties with the rules and finding other venues in which to deliberate."<sup>276</sup> As the argument goes—at least in the ideal—official civil-military interactions are conducted in official venues and in the spirit of democratic transparency. It is possible that President Funes, if he did explicitly authorize the truce, realized that admitting to negotiating with gang members—mass murderers—would incite conservative criticism and public backlash. General Payés admitted as much, claiming the country would have destroyed him had they known what the inner circle was really up to.<sup>277</sup> The informal networking that occurred to enlist

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<sup>273</sup> Figures reported by the Salvadoran government, found in Seelke, *Gangs in Central America*, 11.

<sup>274</sup> Douglas Farah, "The Transformation of El Salvador's Gangs into Political Actors," *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, 21 June 2012, 1; see also "Rival Honduras Gangs Declare Truce," *Al Jazeera.com*, 28 May 2013, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/americas/2013/05/201352822569919850.html>.

<sup>275</sup> Thomas C. Bruneau, "Street Gangs in Central America: Combating Them with Intelligence Fusion Centers," *E-International Relations*, 8 March 2014, <http://www.e-ir.info/2014/03/08/street-gangs-in-central-america-combating-them-with-intelligence-fusion-centers/>.

<sup>276</sup> David Pion-Berlin, "Informal Civil-Military Relations in Latin America: Why Politicians and Soldiers Choose Unofficial Venues," *Armed Forces and Society* 36, no. 3 (2010): 527.

<sup>277</sup> Martínez, "Making a Deal with Murderers."

Mijango and Colindres on behalf of the Salvadoran government conforms to Pion-Berlin's model in which the civilians initiate bilateral informal discussions in order to resolve a contentious issue.<sup>278</sup>

Regardless of how the meetings initiated, national security policy was formulated in an inherently undemocratic way—again. While the success of the gang truce yielded immediate results, the long term impact has yet to be realized. Many are concerned that by negotiating with the gangs, they have been elevated in prominence and sophistication as political actors. Farah remarks that the government of El Salvador quickly fell hostage to the gangs:

[The gangs] believe the balance of power is now in their favor because the government, unwilling to risk a return to high levels of violence, has only to be threatened with more violence in order to grant more concessions to groups that have terrorized the country for more than a decade. This has already led to more concessions than were made known in the earlier talks.<sup>279</sup>

Those on the political right and members of the ARENA Party have been asking exactly what promises have been made to the gangs. In January 2014, Representative Roberto d'Aubuisson accused the Funes Administration for arranging the truce in March 2012, but also for having used funds from the prison budget to bribe both gang members and their families to maintain the truce.<sup>280</sup> Salvadoran Attorney General Luis Martínez, an outspoken critic of negotiating with the gangs, confirmed these transactions in a probe released in March 2014.<sup>281</sup>

In El Salvador, the policy of negotiating with gangs was a political gambit, whether as a well-laid plan or a stop-gap measure, the truce bought the FMLN time to implement some of their social programs. But in the end, it may have just served as a

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<sup>278</sup> Pion-Berlin, "Informal," 533.

<sup>279</sup> Farah, "Transformation," 1.

<sup>280</sup> Eugenia Velásquez, "Roberto d'Aubuisson: 'gobierno financió tregua de maras,'" *El Diario Hoy.com*, 22 January 2014, [http://www.elsalvador.com/mwedh/nota/nota\\_completa.asp?idCat=47655&idArt=8499198](http://www.elsalvador.com/mwedh/nota/nota_completa.asp?idCat=47655&idArt=8499198).

<sup>281</sup> Juan Carlos Vásquez, "Fiscal confirma que pandillas recibieron dinero por la tregua," *El Mundo.com*, 6 March 2014, <http://elmundo.com.sv/fiscal-confirma-que-pandillas-recibieron-dinero-por-la-tregua>.

political expedient, just as *mano dura* policies did under ARENA's leadership. Sadly for El Salvador, if the elevation of gangs into the political realm proves dangerous, it will be the fault of a few who made back room deals. Indeed, towards the end of his presidency, Funes began to reduce his levels of commitment to gang mediation.<sup>282</sup> As the gangs have perceived the government to be uncooperative, and with the replacement of Ricardo Perdomo as Minister of Security—another known critic of the negotiations—the gang truce collapsed and the homicide rates again surged.<sup>283</sup> According to a recent PNC disclosure, the end of November 2014 saw 3,429 homicides for the year compared to 2,490 in 2012; hopeful in the report, though, the PNC reported that the rate of daily homicides is down from earlier in the year (11 per day vice 13 per day).<sup>284</sup> Regardless, the spike towards the close of Funes' presidency has led many of his critics to believe that negotiating with the gangs indeed made them more powerful. For example, since the breakdown of the truce, the gangs have now opted for a strategy of attacking PNC and FAES officers directly.<sup>285</sup>

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<sup>282</sup> Seelke, *Gangs in Central America*, 12.

<sup>283</sup> Linda Garrett, "El Salvador Update," *Center for Democracy in the Americas*, 7 October 2014, <http://www.democracyinamericas.org/pdfs/El%20Salvador%20Update%20September%202014.pdf>; see also Martínez, "Making a Deal with Murderers."

<sup>284</sup> "Homicidios con tendencia a la baja en los últimos meses," *Diario Co Latino.com*, 6 November 2014, <http://nuevaweb.diariocolatino.com/homicidios-con-tendencia-a-la-baja-en-los-ultimos-meses/>.

<sup>285</sup> Associated Press, "El Salvador: Gang Truce Fails to Ease Violence, Officials Say," *The New York Times*, 7 April 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/08/world/americas/el-salvador-gang-truce-fails-to-ease-violence-officials-say.html>.



Figure 14. President Sanchez Cerén swearing in on 1 June 2014.<sup>286</sup>

The election of Sánchez Cerén, former FMLN guerrilla leader, prompted questions about El Salvador's future course. Would the election result in a rift with the United States in the fight against narcotrafficking? an alignment with Latin America's Left? In terms of security, however, Cerén's initial months in office have indicated a higher level of coherent civilian ownership of security policy formation. So far President Sánchez Cerén has distanced himself from the truce negotiations and continued with Funes' prevention and rehabilitation programs. In August of 2014, leaders of *Mara Salvatrucha* and *Calle 18* publicly called on the Cerén Administration to resume truce mediation, offering to cease their attacks on the police and the military. Cerén replied that

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<sup>286</sup> Photo: Moises Castillo, Associated Press, accessed 11 February 2015, <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2014/06/01/el-salvador-inauguration/9849755/>.



he recognized no gang truce and would formulate his own security strategy.<sup>287</sup> He has instated the *Consejo Nacional de Seguridad Ciudadana y Convivencia* (CNSCC), which is a combination of a working group and a national security council. The council has met three times since its inception in September and consists of important actors across El Salvador: church leaders, business leaders, local governors, the attorney general, political party representatives, subject matter experts, members of the press, and, of course, the president himself.<sup>288</sup> The only apparently questionable move on Cerén's part has been the retention of General Payés as Minister of Defense, still a lightning rod for unwanted attention as the Ministry of Justice continues to investigate President Funes' handling of the 2012 gang truce.

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<sup>287</sup> "El Salvador gangs offer truce with government," *Al Jazeera.com*, 30 August 2014.  
<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/americas/2014/08/el-salvador-gangs-offer-truce-with-government-201483053728218357.html>.

<sup>288</sup> "Presentan Consejo Nacional de Seguridad Ciudadana y Convivencia," Ministerio de Justicia y Seguridad Pública, 29 September 2014,  
[http://www.seguridad.gob.sv/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=4356:presentan-consejo-nacional-de-seguridad-ciudadana-y-convivencia&catid=1\\_noticias-ciudadano](http://www.seguridad.gob.sv/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=4356:presentan-consejo-nacional-de-seguridad-ciudadana-y-convivencia&catid=1_noticias-ciudadano).

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## VI. CONCLUSION

This thesis argues that El Salvador under the leadership of FMLN President Mauricio Funes (2009-2014) witnessed suboptimal ideal civil-military relations and increasing trend in militarization. El Salvador in the 20th century experienced an uninterrupted 70 years of authoritarian military rule from 1932—1979. This period of rule culminated in a civil war that strained the military's relationship with both the government and society. Salvadorans ready for peace signed the 1992 Chapultepec Peace Accords and allowed the United Nations to mediate the process of demobilization. Among the successes of the peace process were the demobilization and disarmament of the FMLN, the reduction of the FAES, the disbandment of former state security and intelligence services, the formation of the PNC, and the investigation of human rights violations. Yet the peace did not go far enough in reintegrating former combatants back into society, recovering the economy, and coping with rising security challenges.<sup>289</sup>

First among security challenges in democratic El Salvador has been the rise of domestic insecurity by way of transnational gangs and the drug trade. As a result, security policy formation has remained a highly contentious issue. In the 2000s, the conservative ARENA party unrolled *mano dura* policies that only exacerbated the security problem: hardened the gangs, crammed the prisons, and eroded due process and civil rights. After their consecutive failures, the middle-of-the-road FMLN candidate and former newscaster Mauricio Funes won the public's support for a different approach to crime. Funes delivered a massive increase to the numbers of troops on the streets in order to reinforce the ailing PNC and deter criminal activity generally. He increased the presence of the FAES involved in internal security from 1,975 in 2009 to 11,200 effectives by 2014.<sup>290</sup>

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<sup>289</sup> Summary of successes and failures from Doyle and Sambanis, *Making War and Building Peace*, 206–9.

<sup>290</sup> “Situación de la Seguridad,” 90.

During the Funes Administration, this thesis assesses that civil-military relations did not conform to the CCMR “trinity” model that considers effectiveness, efficiency, and democratic civilian control. While the FAES has demonstrated a noted ability to perform its external mission in deterring aggression and participating in multinational peacekeeping operations around the world, its domestic mission, as laid out in Salvadoran military strategy, has not yet succeeded in restoring citizen security. The FAES is highly efficient in the use of its resources in terms of both manpower and budget. Perhaps the weakest area of the trinity for El Salvador is that of democratic civilian control; despite the legislature’s ability to enact policy, define objectives, and formulate defense policy, lawmakers fail to adequately oversee the FAES agenda. Additionally, the MOD lacks almost all qualifiers for healthy civil-military relations: it is not civilianized, does not manage defense objectives, does not organize and equip the military, does not facilitate organizational distance from the executive, and fails to create competition among the military services within the FAES. In sum, while El Salvador may possess the most progressive civil-military relationship in Central America, there is room for improvement.

Militarization in El Salvador is a persistent theme throughout its history. While the grassroots network that connected the military to the serving population fractured during the civil war, the prevalence of Salvadoran troops in the lives of everyday Salvadorans has not diminished. Outside of the sheer size of the force that patrols San Salvador and some of the more violent zones of the state, the visual manifestation of their presence is very prominent in the media. When President Funes originally pledged the FAES to internal security, public approval skyrocketed, but as the years wore on, there is little evidence to show that more troops has reduced crime or given the PNC room to recuperate. Indeed, the PNC today is rocked by one corruption scandal after the next while the FAES patrolling are at record numbers. Meanwhile the legacy of El Salvador’s history of militarization has led to the polarization of Salvadoran society between crime and government, identification with and desensitization to violence, and a surplus of military training and firearms to be used by other nefarious organizations.

The connection between civil-military relations and militarization in El Salvador has been security policy formation. Whether conducted in a somewhat transparent manner in official venues or privately and undemocratically, state policy on the question of citizen security dramatically affects the lives of Salvadorans. Two specific cases under President Funes' leadership stand out. In the first case, President Funes maintained a questionable connection to his chief military advisor, General David Munguía Payés. Payés occupied various positions during the Funes Administration; he was pulled out of retirement to serve as Minister of Defense, then was appointed as Minister of Justice and Security, and when the legislature overturned his appointment, Payés served as a private military advisor to Funes before finally being restored to the post of Minister of Defense—a post he occupies to this day. President Funes and General Payés orchestrated the involvement of the FAES in the public security sphere largely in private with very little consultation of the legislature or the military.

The second case involves the gang truce of 2012. The government, via General Payés' emissaries, secretly sought a negotiated peace with imprisoned Salvadoran gang leaders in order to bring the homicide rate down. When the murder rate dropped at alarming levels, a newspaper revealed that the government had indeed negotiated with murderers. Although Funes has denied any involvement with its design, the truce validated itself by keeping homicide levels down for over a year and a half. President Funes' government worked to further negotiations with gang leaders and replicate its success, but ultimately failed when opposition forces within the government began investigating what promises had been pledged to the gangsters—an investigation that is still making headlines.

In sum, while El Salvador has made notable gains in civil-military relations, there is still room for abuse of the national security process. Such abuses, as in the case of the FAES's new permanent internal security role and the gang truce, the level and rate of militarization in Salvadoran society sadly continues to elevate. The correct course is admittedly difficult to find and implement. After all, what good is a democracy if it is overrun by criminal insecurity? President Funes, either through ignorance or design, consented to act nearly unilaterally on behalf of the state in order to buy time for the

FMLN's liberal agenda of rehabilitation and prevention. More immediately, he acted in the interest of political expediency and popularity. Whether the course El Salvador is currently on, one of elevated troop levels on the streets and sophisticated political gangs that use bodies as political chips, has been worth the gamble in terms of unrolling the FMLN's agenda is unknown. An early look at President Cerén's time in office seems optimistic that he is committed to acting more transparently than his predecessor and allowing time for his social programs to improve conditions inside El Salvador while seeking international help in developing the region. Whether El Salvador can break its pattern of internal violence hangs in the balance.

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